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P'an Ku



Human Nature

Pass it to me
In a violet field where,
The blossoms fill the air
With your sweet perfume.
I taste it , sip it, and
Pass it back to you.
I feel an urgency
Burning me inside.
When?
We smile so politely
Brushing past the niceties
Touching hands as
It spins in a circle.
How shall we dance
This tricky little number?
Where all the shadows watch
Waiting in corners-
Behind me.
Where will it be?
It will be, you must realize;
I have claimed this paradise
For myself, and I alone.
Racing, tripping through the blooms
Playing, hiding from
You, him, and her.
Can you hear me?

---- Violet

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W.O.N.

Stephanie Sasso

Song So Sweet

What happens to a song so sweet
That starts from the tapping of your feet.
That ends up in a place where your thoughts meet.

When that rhythm takes hold.
You move your head and feet
without control,
that song suddenly turns to gold.
And before you know it you lose
Control.

So when that rhythm engulfs your soul
Just remember, that's how good songs unfold

----Rocket

Monkey Business

I went and played the piano
The day it was in June
The room was full of monkeys
Who came to hear my tune
They sat so still their backs so straight
They hardly blinked an eye
If it were not for twitching tails
I thought that they had died
Politeness ruled among this group
They tried to be attentive
And as my hands touched on the keys
I wasn't real inventive
The sound came forth as it was written
The melody was there
Not the music I loved
I was too afraid to dare
My mind went blank and stomach sank
I slowly turned to stone
No more notes came forth that day
So all the monkeys went home.

---- Sally Rudolph

Headlines

Coffee gurgles, bananas shed
their egg yolk skin into scabs
of dark chocolate. The calico Persian with tufts of white, patches
of orange, rabbit paws, curious ears, orphan Annie eyes licks seafood brunch
with her miniature tongue. She leans
comfortably on an opened philosophy book curling her tail around Plato.

The Miami Herald spews cynicism
from its silent movie pages.

“Man arrested in the death of baby girl”

“Missing sisters found slain”

Sifting in a glass house, a sieve
in hand, I imagine cold buried faces.

An egoist licks the blade dry after kneading it in someone’s side.
the intuitive cannibal motivates
himself to lie, fangs suctioned
on ribs with a hearty smile.

An opinionated loner builds trust
from stone, cements boulders into a brilliant bastion,
protected from the protectors.

Positive peacock butterflies
swirl around an angst ridden
head hoping to activate
the tickling of ears.

Hermits sculpted in picture frames
disregarded interaction
gaze at the collage
slowly forming the word
trust
from an unlearned tongue

---- Natalie Kappes



The Riches Of Innocence

Carolina R. Effron

Mi Vida Será

El despertar de un nuevo día
la sonrisa de un mañana
la caricia del viento
briza dulce, luz temprana

Humedad en tu tocar
musica al suspirar
siento y no veo
tu presencia yo deseo

La presencia de la felicidad se busca
la vida no es necesariamente justa
nosotros debemos saber
como la vida querer

Y así a la luna llena
a una violenta tormenta en el mar
el petálo de una rosa
y un lago de crystal

Perla marina
tierno beso de esperanza
quiero libre volar
mientras la vida me abraza.

---- Marlies Caspari

New World Order Perversions

a young drifter enters the city...

12:02 Waterloo
for today 3rd of May...

minstrels of double speak
cling
like psychic leeches
determined to suck
the spirit dry

first you use machines
then you wear machines
and then...
never forget
where you wanna go.

lisa and frank
have been married 21 years
she for the 2nd time
he for the 3rd
one day they will meet...

a cliche is the truth
trivialized.

Life (if you can use it)
Liberty (if you can afford it)
and the pursuit
of enumeration...
get off my crotch-
shifty-eyes, slipping trust
into chomp chomp jaws-
pockets are so empty
I can feel my testicles.

here's the monument
it stands high

cars wore out
clothes tore

cans emptied
furniture broke
and all the regurgitated thoughts
clogged the drains.

where're you from?

----Matthew Tabin



Fragile Strength

Laura Sparaco



Up and Down

Linnea Barry

Oppressed Dream

Oppressed dream
same old theme
black and white the color scheme

Failing men
home again
Daniel's in a lion's den

Supportive wives
Save their lives
Still smile to serve and feed the five

In bright sun
the children run
some new kid has got a gun

Chalk on slate
a bit too late
ignorance taught the young to hate

Money speaks
controls the weak
and takes the souls of those who seek

Saturated brains
drugblood veins
reach the high and know no pain

Loser's reflection
blind subjection
couldn't take society's rejection

Close the text
no more tests
just leave us lost Generation X

---Shani Marks

Belief

Left to see,
not to choose.
A smile which precedes
an empty room.
Only sure to open widely,
a one-sided door.
The way seeming fit,
for you to endure.
Tongue stripped down,
all strength of mind misused
Concepts to be drilled
mental innovation abused.
Avoiding all conscience,
to a hollow point of view.
Left to see,
not to choose.

---- John Spano

Mentor Lost

"Spread your legs and I'll show you what I believe in."
Those were the last real words
you said to me.
I laughed, taking you in stride -
envying your bravery.
Making an ass of yourself
takes a certain amount of selflessness.

Now that you are gone
I realize you were an inspiration to me.
You saw my work as I do.
That last lecherous squeeze
means a lot to me now.

I will lay a flower at your feet
and continue this Kamikaze - crazy mission.
Without fear
repeat it - Without fear.

--- Rena Register

Temporary Boss:

I was ten years old. On the verge of puberty, eagerly waiting to embrace the challenges of womanhood. At this point in life, when physical and visual contact are essential, I lost my sight.

I can't remember the exact circumstances under which I first lost my sight. However according to my mother, my aunt was the one who first discovered that I could not see. My mother told me that my aunt had sent me for a towel, when I did not return immediately, she got curious and came to see what the delay was. Upon seeing me, my aunt was taken aback as I desperately probed for the towel. Although, she was worried, she tried to convince herself that I was being mischievous.

My other family members didn't believe me at first either. They thought I was being the typical ten-year-old, seeking attention. I remember telling everyone, "I can't see" and they would say, "Pickney (child), stop mocking the blind people or you will become blind too." ... Talk about being blind. Everyone finally believed me one day while we were having dinner. The image is so vivid, it's like it had been photographed in my memory. I was sitting at the dining table; the meal consisted of rice and chicken (my favorite). Two of my family members decided to take advantage of this fact. They conspired to steal my chicken to see if I was really blind because they knew that to "endanger" my chicken, was the best tactic for me to quit the pretense... if that's what it was. — They did succeed in their task because of course I wasn't pretending. At the time I did not know that what they had done, they later confessed and all I could have said was, "Lord bless them for they know not what they do/did."

It's ironic that I can't remember the loss of my sight affecting my schoolwork perse but I do remember that it affected my school activities. I recall one particular day; I was at school playing netball. The game had just been

introduced in the school, so everyone, including myself, was striving to be impressive. With regards to this fact, everyone noticed that I was making a lot of mistakes. Every time someone would throw the ball to me it would fall or hit me in the face. I sometimes caught the ball, however, —awkwardly— as I recognized blurry representations of the color of the ball. Until this moment, I had not realized how serious my situation was; my young brain was oblivious to the fact that I had a problem. My teacher, Miss Anderson, also recognized the problem then and called it to the attention of the principal, who notified my mother and advised her to take me to the hospital.

The depressing odors of sick people, medicines, sulphur, unwashed bodies. The screams of babies being injected, the agonizing murmurs of people in pain, the urgent chattering of people's feet running away from their illnesses and the "clitter-clattering" of the stretcher seemingly in pursuit of them. The loss of my sight seemed to have made my other senses more alert. I could actually taste the insipid medicines at the base of my throat. The only thing that kept me from going insane was the feel of my mother's hand holding my arm, as we entered the hospital.

God Bless my mother's hand because without them, I would have given new meaning to the word "casualty". I climbed steps that did not exist, and continued walking when there were steps, collided with *metal* bystanders, and smiled with people who weren't really there. After my ears had its full of noise, my throat had accumulated enough medicine to cure all the other sick people in the hospital and the feel of my mother's hand was no longer recognizable because I had become numb from her now tight grip. The doctor finally called me into his office. After x-raying my eyes and doing all his other doctor's stuff (e.g. say "ah"),

A New Life Gained

he told my mother that I was to be admitted. When, my mother told me, I replied, "admit me to what?" of course I did not know what admit meant then.

I believe I stayed in the hospital for about a month. At first it had been like a nightmare but it turned out to one of the most memorable, eye opening, times in my life. I had a small bed in the corner of the children's ward, towards the window. On the opposite side of the bed hung a curtain, for privacy. My curtain soon started crying from being overworked, everyday there was a new group of student doctors coming to observe me, ask me questions and make their particular comments. I was tempted to change my name to Mona, in memory of Mona Lisa because I finally knew how she felt. I must admit that I was flattered with all the attention. I felt so important and I could feel the love in air. I thought a cloud of love had descended on my head.

My family was great source of motivation for me also. My mother and father came to visit me everyday after work. My mother often brought me a whole big box of Kentucky Fried Chicken. I started regaining my sight as gradually and suddenly as it had went away. I remember this day quite well, there I was Mr. Kernel smiling up at me from his red and white home that was on the verge of explosion with its mouth-watering contents and tempting aroma. As I was about to "talk" to my mouth, that had been having a ravenous conversation with my stomach, I saw this little black figure looking up at me with pleading eyes and I thought, if only he had come a day earlier. A moment later, my grandaunt who had just arrived stood right over the chair I was sitting and above all the chattering, she asked, "Where's Althea?" Like a graveyard, suddenly there was a deafening silence then immediately afterwards laughter exploded like the fireworks on July 4. My grandaunt was still puzzled until I touched her hand and said, "Here I am."

Then she too began to laugh.

My misfortune brought my family closer together. The strong foundation created, helped my parents to survive through this depressing time. They had a lot of expenses because of my illness. I had to take an operation called the Scat Scan. This was a great expense for my parents because it was not in their budget. However they acquired the money so I was able to undergo the operation. I had a constant headache. I don't know if this was because I was nervous or because I hadn't eaten for two days. The doctors ordered that I be given liquids only, because food would interfere with the operation. After I had regularized my breathing that I had held for two days, I devoured my two beef patties and drink in a wink. My parents laughed and sighed with relief for I had regained my appetite and they knew that Althea was back, sight and all.

Before I left the hospital I was told to return on a regular basis for eye examinations and medication. The medications had side effects, one in particular, made me come to grips with my fear that I had eluded before through laughter. One morning after I had taken one of those big, yellow and red "throat-blockers," I tried to walk to the bathroom and to my surprise, my joints were creaking like rusted door hinges. I began to cry as the idea of being crippled came to mind.

I left the hospital with a lot more than my restored sight. I also gained an assurance of love and appreciation for people, life and everything else that I had thought to be meaningless before.

This experience was significant for me because it has made me the person I am today. It has established my strong family ties. I no longer take anything for granted everything is intrinsically good and valuable in my eyes. I think its amazing how the loss of my sight has helped me to see so much in life that I could not see or did not acknowledge before.



Romania

Paul Berson

A Mother's Love

(A poem just for you)

A Mother's love is like an ocean
Big and vast, wide and strong
A Mother's love is like an ocean
Yearning to touch the beach all day long.

A Mother's love is likened to a long walk on a sunny beach
The sun on one side, with
The ocean running to the shore on the other.

The sun represents God-shining brightly
Covering you with warmth and joy.
The ocean represents the mother's love
Hoping to touch her little special joy.

A walk on the beach requires both the sun and the ocean.
For without the sun-nothing lives.
The beach is neither sunny nor bright.
But without the ocean-the beach is soundless...
Empty... Void.

"Children, honor thy mother and thy father
That thy days may be long in the land."
Simply put, long days allow greater
Times where mother's love can touch you,
So, when "momma" is gone- you can
"Remember Momma in a special way."

God loves mothers and especially mothers-to-be.
He holds his breath and waits patiently,
For each and every woman (and no, not little girls)
To bring that blessed soul into this world.
One who can praise Him, one who can sing
One who can worship, and who can bring
Joy to his heart, a smile to His face.
A child that will bless another in this cold and lonely place.

Who can know the depth or height or length of a mother's love?
Only one alone- God.

Who can describe a mother's love?
A mother's love is new wine in new bottles.
Her love is a kiss while asleep.
A mother's love is for keeps.

It will not leave you when days are dark,
But will laugh when days are sunny.
A mother's love is a blessing to all
(It even wipes your nose when it's runny)

A Mother's love is like the ocean
Big and vast, wide and strong.
A Mother's love touches her child
Everyday, all its lifelong. ---Maxwell L. Highsmith

What You Wish For

Mom grins, her left hand clutches my right.
Make a wish, punkin.
Louis Armstrong cheeks inflate then hollow
to torment thirty waxy flames,
snuff their glow.
A chubby blonde, elbows on the table,
claps his hands before a gaping smile.
Arms folded, Uncle Matthew leans
away from the cake light.

Mom slices cakes for waiting mouths.
Matt pulls a dead candle from the carcass,
sucks icing from its bottom,
hovers over me,
knuckles kneading the tablecloth.
What did you wish for?

Love, happiness.

His face wears black robes.
You don't know how to wish.
Ask for the winning lottery numbers,
to be thin and beautiful as Cindy Crawford.

My heels propel my chair away from him.
Is that what you wish for?

If I were you, I'd wish for a husband
I rise up.
Without love?
His mouth is a dark rainbow.
There a lot of candles on that cake.

I circle him.
What do you wish for?

He bobs and weaves.
I wish for money, power and sexual glory

Stalking still, I ask.
Do you ever get it, I mean, the way you want?
Matt wobbles back.

My little man hands me a slice of cake.
Hoppy birfday, Mommy. I luf you.

My eyes check Matt's king.
I lean down to kiss a miniature earlobe,
raise my spine full length.
My mom strides over to me,
slips an arm around my waist.

---- Kathleen Marie Davis

fourteen million-to-one

when I win the lottery I'm gonna' tell all the assholes to go to hell
their car keys dangling— approval held— sex used— love earned?

when I win the lottery I'll hold those accountable
I'll hunt down Mrs. Lozar my second grade math teacher
make her know the fear she instilled in me

when I win the lottery people will want me
Mom? Mom who? I used to know someone named Mom
she sent me to school in long-sleeved turtle-necks and pants in June
to cover purple/red stripes

when I win the lottery I'll woo my first lover
wear skin tight red dress, buy him Maine lobster Pouligny Montrechet
look him straight in the eye, gleefully announce
I never enjoyed sex with you anyway

when I win the lottery I won't choose between milk or bread
never eat peanut butter and bologna again
I'll order an entire meal at St. Michel's
from the dessert cart: chocolate mousse, caramel almond creme,
raspberry fudge in vanilla sauce, creme broulee'
without puking later
go to school for an education not a degree
get facials at Jacques de Sange
liposuction every ten months
build a ball pit in the basement of my four-story house
Pete Rose will coach my son's little league team

when I get an extra dollar
and I win the lottery
things will be different

---- Kathleen Marie Davis

The Greatest Show On Earth

I can't think- My vision's blurry- There's funny spots in front of my eyes. It's headache time again, and the show is about to begin. Ha- what a joke. One of these days I'll show him.

"Step right up, folks, and get your tickets- to the greatest spectacle you'll ever see in your lifetime- 'Madelaines Headache.' Folks, I know you've heard of 'Rosemary's Baby'; you've probably seen 'Jerry's Kids' on TV, but now my friends, your in for a treat. Tonight, folks, this tops everything you've seen before. Because you're gonna have the opportunity to view a headache as it's never been seen before by human eyes. Tonight, ladies and gents, you get to see the poundin', the agony that this little lady is going through. And you wanna know how your gonna do this? Through her ear, that's how. Look at Madelaine, look at that hole in her ear. (Hey, fella , don't get too close. You gotta buy a ticket first.) Anyway, tonight is your lucky night. (Listen, Buster, stop the chitchat, I'm tryin' to run a show here.) So what's it gonna be- who's buyin', cryin', dyin', to look and see? It's not everyday that Madelaine's feelin' bad. But I promise you, folks, she feels lousy tonight. Just put your two bucks down on the table here and get ready for somethin' you'll wanna tell your kids about..."

Oh, God, why does he always act so stupid? I can't see straight and he's runnin' off at the mouth about my head, my ear - next thing you know, he'll be talkin' about my right hand with the big star-shaped thumb. I know my ear has a big hole in it , but so what? He'll do anything for a buck. I feel used, abused and I'm tired of listenin' to his promises. Why can't we go back home? I'm not gettin' any younger, you know. This whole thing's wearin' me down.

"Who's gonna be first to look into Madelaine's ear? Come on up, Ma'am. She

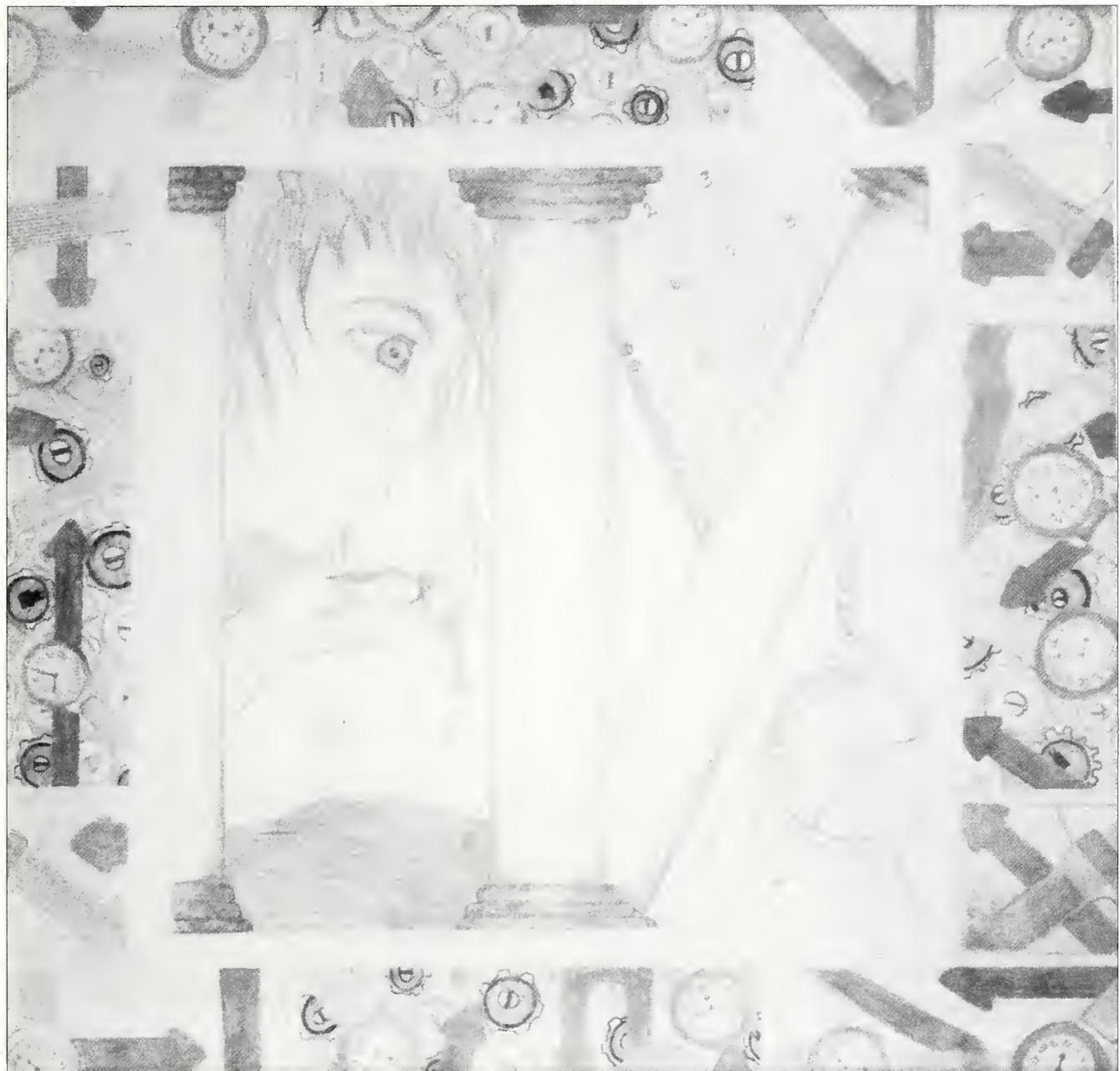
doesn't bite. In fact, she hurtin' so much she can barely move. Okay, ma'am, you're a lucky lady- you paid your money and here you go. Just move up here as close to Madelain as you can. That's it- now look into the whole. Whaddya see? OOPS- don't tell your secrets, now. But I guarantee, folks, that this little lady's gettin' a lot for her money. Right now, she's lookin' into Madelaine's head and seein' all sorts of things- oozin and brusin', blood, pus, you name it and Madelaine's got it. And if you don't believe me, then just put your money where your mouth is and see for yourself. Okay, ma'am, if you're finished, just move out of the way and make room for the next lucky person."

I've had it. I swear I'm gonna find a way to stop this. Maybe if I turn around the other way, those fools out there'll see that I'm not such a friggin' freak. Oh, damn, I can barely move. Wait a minute. What about those pills I've been savin'? I'm gonna pop a few and see what happens. It's not easy, but I think I can reach in my pocket with my left hand and get them. There- I got them - now I'll just brush my hand across my mouth, and maybe he won't see. Okay, they're in my mouth - no water to help them go down, but I gotta do it. He's doin' some bang-up business while I'm sittin' here with my head feelin' like it's gonna fall off. Hey, I think those pills are pretty good. I'm startin' to feel better already. Why is he lookin' at me that way? Maybe he knows what I did, but so what.

At least nobody's gonna be starin' through my ear anymore.

"Step right up, folks, and get your tickets - to the greatest spectacle you'll ever see in your life time - 'Madelaine's Thumb'."

---- Mary Ann Magnes



When The Second Hand Stopped

Jillian Robinson

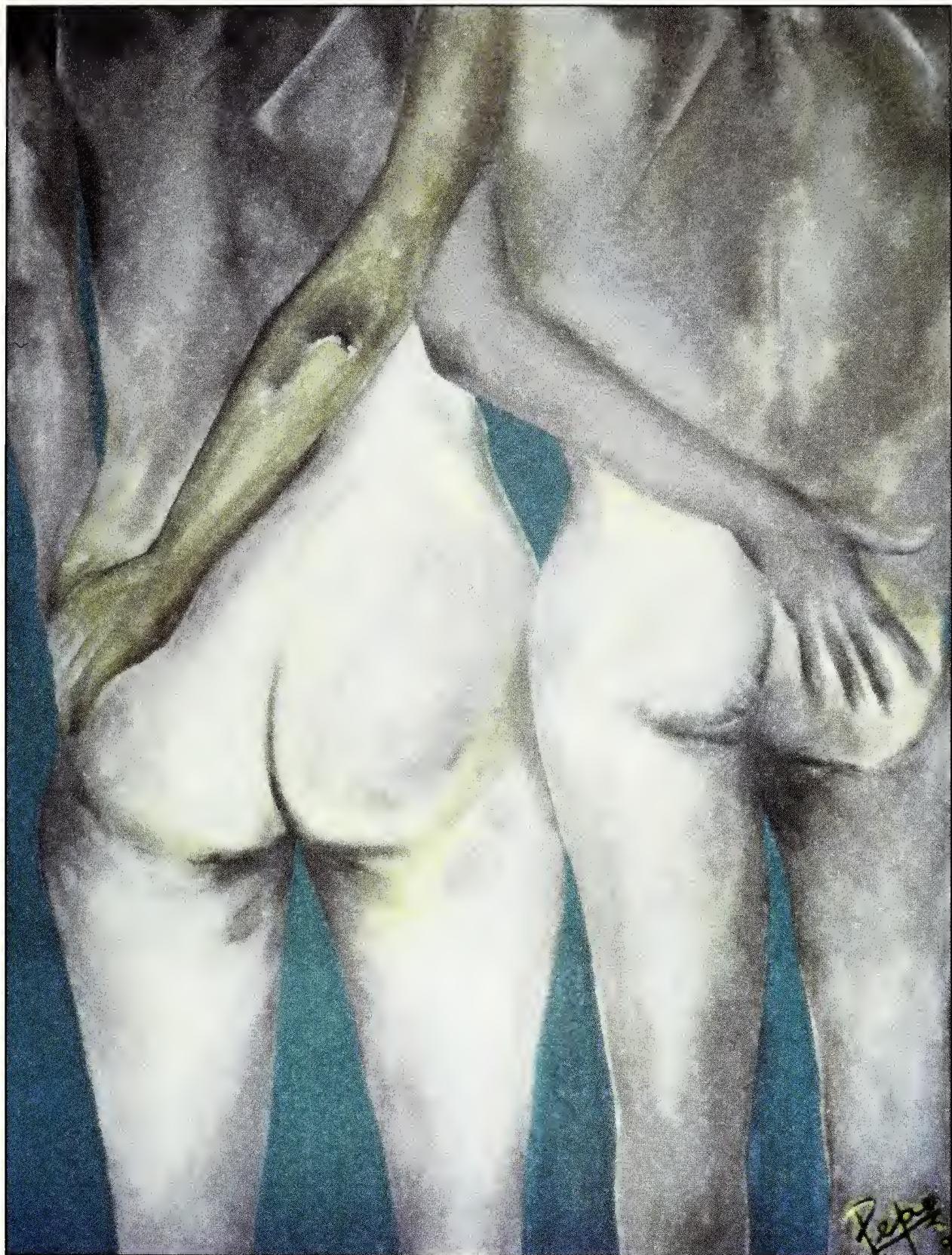
Forsaking Eden

As the sun puckered its mouth
Each plume of light slipping
Like a serpent down our necks
It was as clear as God
We were the hemlock of Eden.

Wrapping vines like legs around each other.
Blooming into one another
Like mouths, like foundering lips,
Suckle. Flaming across each other
In little brush fires.

Little sexes curling like bean stalks,
Lush and erect in God's temporal garden.
Pure as moon skin, Fervent as tongue
Swollen like limbs, Like cocks
And Eden forsaken with dawn.

---- Brandy Sejeck



Possessions

Jose Navarro

Selling Your Soul to the Devil

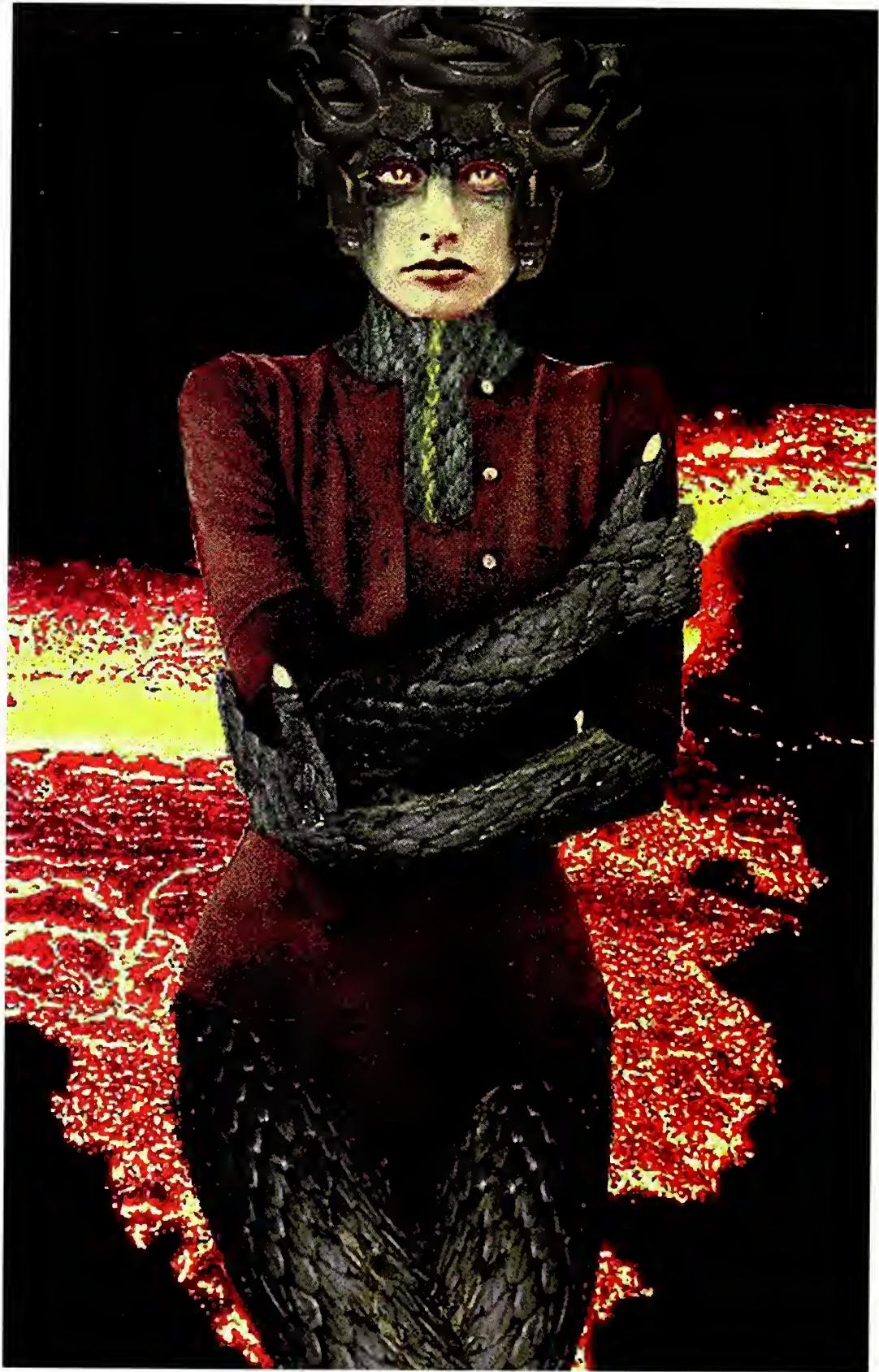
Casting stones
into a circle of infinity.
He comes to me again,
like a lover, who craves the
sadistic touch of his mistress.
Eyes, like the empty bowls of
starving children.
Hands in my brain,
fist in my mouth.
He tells me tales of
pathetic, forlorn, distortions.
Of worlds and the universe to come.
My perception is beyond His reason,
and I believe every fable fed to me
through the bitter syringe of time.
He mocks my existence,
and I succumb to the Heroin
He's poisoned me with.
Filled with disgust;
My failure to control this
conflict of domination.
I bow my head to
the Master of Shame.
Then he asks me my price.

---- Alyssa Yankwitt

Forsaken Prayers and other Meaningless Nothings

I'm not that type of girl
to look you in the eyes
to steal the secrets in your spine
to watch you
deceive empathy
silently
without cause
But I know why your eyes
are hollowed from time
I know the reasons you
cut my tongue out
every chance I speak
But still I look with contempt
and wonder what blasphemy
spoiled your rotten mood
I'm not that type of girl
to kiss and tell
as you fuck my mind
and rape my ego
am I a whore because I can
close my mouth and open my legs
at the same time
I smile with discontent
I understand those misdemeanors
and I appreciate your crime
I revel in your sins
and the purity that surrounds them
I never cease to wonder
why my conscience fails
every time a crystal ball breaks
into a thousand pieces of memory

---- Alyssa Yankwitt



Reptilia

28

Jose Martinez

Reaction

The creature snatched me from behind,
a squeezing sucking vacuum,
Extracting my innocence
with the fanged syringe of demons.

Sucking.

Draining.

And innocent becomes foreign
and evolves into a distant dream
that has been ripped from the womb by slow motion cesarean
in the absence of anesthesia.

And the creature
ever present
is brandishing the surreal medal of my forsaken innocence
as a tyrant or conqueror brandishing his double edged sword.

A catalyst to the vaporization
of humanity...

---- Brandi E. Hass

My Print

I come triple straight like the colors of a prism...
Reflecting off your bullshit and sorry criticism.

I'll infringe upon your style, set ablaze to your pattern.
Abolish your profile, make you red like planet Saturn.

Play you like a harp, pull all your fuckin' strings...
Don't slip on sweat your drippin' from the ill shit that I
bring.

My words fall upon the surface like Winter's wicked hail...

I'm flowin' parallel - abrade your mental source...
My principle is forever strong without the use of force.

My persona and touch have a distinctive, acquired taste...
And I just made my print for the entire female race.

---- Melissa Opper

She,

Just writing to let you know I still dream about you after I wake up. Still pondering the thought that your wasted again and I'm waiting on your vomit. What would it take for you to slam the door behind you, jump into my arms and move into a fuck until the fuzz on the TV screen turns into the morning cartoons? Skipping through edited commercials and cholesterol stained breakfast loaded with asphalt pancakes, drowning in the coffee melting in my esophagus. I'm so sadistic my feelings aren't free anymore. Call me when you come to; how I'd love to be suppressed by your smile once more.

he

---- Sivan Al-Amary

Still Loved
girl left
 dog ran away
 still have the fish

 floating on its side

 so peaceful. . . .

---- Matthew Tabin

The Edge of Midnight

You impatiently drum your fingers on the counter, waiting for a price check. Tension builds in your limbs until it seems to seep from every pore, as puss oozes from an infected wound.

"Hurry up," the man behind you says, his voice a low monotone and nasal. "Something's wrong," he whines, sounding worried and annoyed. You turn around, apologizing for being the cause of the delay. The sight of the pet in his arms brings new meaning to the sign posted on the door. The thick black lettering on bright white paper reads, "Pets are welcome." He puts the alligator on the counter and everyone stands around, speechless, staring at the exotic pet.

Your vision blurs as the counter sinks into nothingness. The alligator floats downward, like a feather gliding in the wind beyond the linoleum tiling. An eerie silence falls over the store. A hot desert replaces the green and white tiles and a vulture screeches in the distance, waiting for death.

The man walks forward to where the counter once was, allowing the quicksand to swallow him up. As the man's head disappears beneath the scorching sand, the floor changes again. A cool breeze replaces the barren desert.

You lick your parched lips, tasting the bitterness of salt and sand as you focus on the changing ground. Waves crash against the remaining bit of linoleum where you stand, sending ocean spray over the tops of your shoes. You stumble backward, frightened, unsure of the changing ground, concerned that it will also swallow you up. Soon the ocean waves dissipate: tranquillity settles over the water.

The man emerges from the ocean, riding a horse, its coat so dark it absorbs the light, consuming the store with darkness. A flash of lightning strikes, filling the store briefly. Thunder rattles the window panes. You turn quickly and run, not wanting to see more.

You fumble with your car keys, eager to be inside, secure in its confines. You start the ignition and find the gentle purr of the engine soothing. Turning, you

emerge onto the main road, realizing there's no traffic. But things quickly change.

You're on an old country road, no longer paved, only a packed reddish dirt beneath the rubber of your tires. Wild-flowers in every color fill the lush, green meadows that surround you on both sides. You sigh, noticing a small church further down the road, enclosed in a white decorative fence. You turn onto the side road that leads to the church, a bell hangs under the porch. It's also used a school-house. Seeing the dead grass and unkempt grounds that the fence holds prisoner, you hope the church hasn't been abandoned.

Thunder cries out as dark, cumulus clouds race the sky, claiming every inch. Opening the church door, the hinges squeak loudly. You step inside, allowing your eyes to adjust to the darkness. Occupied beds line every wall. A small animal, no doubt a rat, chews something to your left. Your eyes look in the direction of the noise. A sigh escapes your lips, seeing the crucifix and remembering the beds, you realize you're in a hospital and know you'll find help.

You step forward and hear a scraping sound, the unmistakable sound of fingernails on a chalkboard. An eerie chill runs up your spine, little hairs on your neck stand up. Like a video in slow motion, you see the crucifix rotate, scraping against the wall, until it is upside down

Lightning strikes, thunder echoes throughout the skies. You get a glimpse of the withered, frail bodies in their beds. A woman sits up, startled, her eyelids quickly flutter open, iridescent green eyes piercing through you like a knife. You turn and run from the hospital. Cold rain stings your arms.

You awake suddenly, finding yourself in the security of your home, your bed. You put your hand on your chest, trying to calm your pulsating heart, saying it was only a dream. As you stumble out of bed, drenched in sweat, hot sand burns your feet. Slowly the walls seem to melt and for miles the only sight you see is sand.

---- Antoinette Swanson



Bamboo

Susan K. Patterson

X-mas in South Florida

Twas the day before Christmas on South Florida Sands,
All the people were shouting cool weather demands.

While everyone played mid-summer sports,
Dressed only in tank tops and Bermuda shorts.

Somewhere in the ocean a sailboat goes by,
While a helicopter drops fake snow from the sky .

Oh, what a sight for Jolly Ole' St. Nick,
Who stops for an ice cream on a popsicle stick.

Here's Santa's not dressed in those stuffy suits,
Just some cutoffs blue jeans and moccasin boots.

His eyes, they don't twinkle, for it's Ray Bans he wears,
And his cheeks are rosy from the way the sun glares

Our town is no place for reindeer and sleigh,
So Santa sits tight in a red chevrolet

There's not many a chimney to come with a bound,
So stockings are best on doorknobs, we've found.

Cookies and milk are still real good snacks,
But our favorite is pizza and beer in six packs.

By the end of the night the Clause Man's ready to crash
But there's always more time for a beach party bash.

If you listen real hard you can hear him exclaim,
"Where's the best place to watch the next Dolphin game?"

---- Kimberly Tranchida

Beams Of Light

Peace glides over me in the warm summer sun I've grown to adore,
Amber rays by the dozen caress my flushed cheeks,
 Seep through my bare skin,
 Moisturize my parched soul,
My eager body drinks the sun's energy,
 with the thirst of a suckling newborn,
My bronze hair glows to the tips;
 splashes against my beaded wet back,
Beams of gold dance over me,
 with the soft slipper of a ballerina,
Warmth oozes into my blood, a welcome visitor, Like the candle and
flame- slow but sure,
 the chips fallen within me from this ice-picked world
 —melt.

Problems fade into the dry breeze- a breath my body gasps for,
Though my moments of enlightenment shine eternally from within,
Brooding clouds part me from my dear sun,
I wait with lingering dreams of a blessed reunion,
Some other day, the Florida way,
Another chance to.. escape.

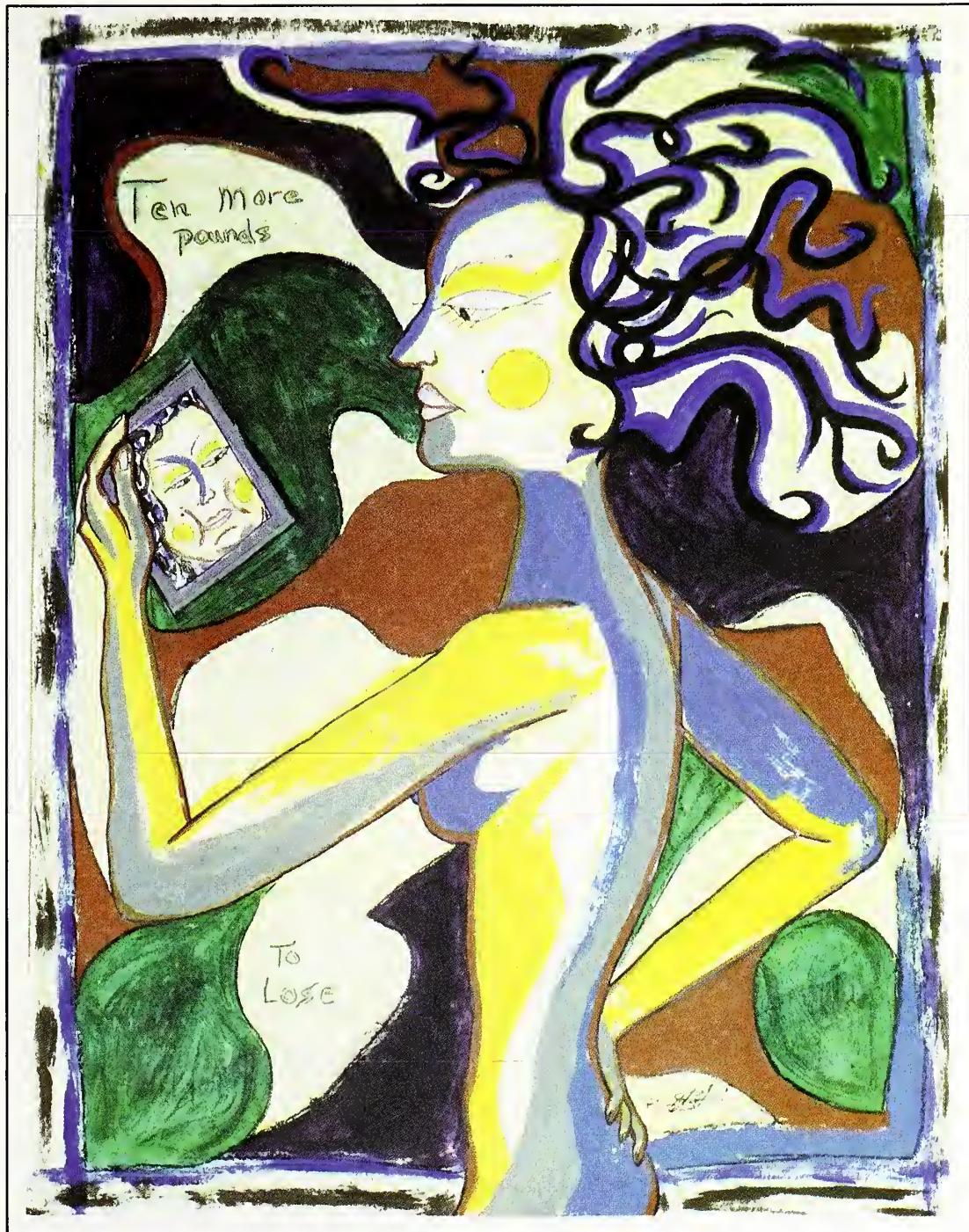
---- Julie Adams

Lipo-Culture

(intended to be read as a rap)

Just suck my fat I'm a simpleton
Don't need exercise I love Doritos, Cokes and gin
Life is one big candy store
Don't eat balanced meals I'm a trippin' sugar whore
My heart's encased in doughnut glaze
Throwin' away my life in this selfish sortta' craze
Doctor mark my body insert your hose
Suck my disease I'll be pretty as a rose
Wow-I'm thin again back to the start
All must be well just don't show me my rotten heart
Can't work it hurts no pain is worth the gain
I flow in this current and always remain the same
I live off history, a leech to society
Growlin' at the world with lazy impropriety
Life is like a soap opera as the world turns it burns
These days of our lives increasingly spell demise
But who cares just sit back at ease relax
Grab a cold Corona let's bitch and chew the fat
And as our bodies swell
Swollen from disease, a self created hell
We won't lift a finger never rise to action
'Cause tears blood pain and sweat don't bring satisfaction
So just suck my fat I'm a simpleton
I'll visit Doc Lipo and get the fix again

---Jim Kennard



Husband's Perspective

Ravinderjit Singh

To You, Good Woman

To you, good woman, dance long and gracefully on my gravetop

I long for you to leave your clumsy state
Nor even the bellboy could carry the luggage under your eyes
I wait for you in moist soil
In the monogamy of sadness and polka-dot cries

There is no reward for mortality, just forgiveness for being selfish
I rise and in my gentle mist I swim through your rooms
I feel your panic as I motion to press your lips
With the grace of this cold one, in death, in bloom

In the dawn of morning you come to waltz on me
Shamed and bewildered the caretakers look on
When will you soon expire, months, days, weeks
I long for your mist, so we can spin and dance the night along

I will rest and turn and curse the day my soul dropped
Keep on, good woman, dance long and gracefully on my gravetop

---- Sivan Al-Amary



Afternoon Shimmer

Laura Sparaco



Kathleen

Victoria Agudelo

Morbid Embrace

I thought of the mortician and
How he'd be my friend
With certain arrogance gripping my breast and
Fingering to depths no man had ever reached.
There I would lay, open and aware,
Soul beside myself
Watching this man and me.
Had he heard my passion's cry?
Seen my heart aflame?
Known as my imagination froze timelessly,
Shocked! By the coldness in my lover's eyes?
Impossible, but
He would be my friend
With sincere intentions removing the pain
Sparing me the heartache,
Saving me the embarrasssment of imagining
My man had ever come to love
Me, now, I was watching him
Severing the glands that
Lust had discomfited...
I thought about the mortician and
How he'd be my friend
For as my lover
He is never quite so attentive to my needs.

---- Angelia L. McGirt

Sanctuary

The land waits
With thorn filled vines
And overgrown shrubs
Till nighttime falls
And nocturnal creatures rise
Then soft whispers call out
To ride the wind
And surround you
The voice leads the way
Through visions
Of bloody baffles
Past moments in time
To the sanctuary
Of your ancestors

--- Antoinette Swanson



The Giving

Christine Albert

Paralyzed by confusion OVER

ever have one of those days
when everything is just a fog
the type of morning
where you didn't get much
sleep
for the 2nd or 3rd day
in a row
haven't shaved
or showered
your hair is a mop
and your contacts
have become clamps on your eyes
so
you rip them out
put on those glasses
with the 5yr. old prescription
and the jeans you're wearing
which are the
most comfortable
pair you own
haven't been washed in a week or so
then you realize
you haven't eaten the day before
or
you can't
remember your last meal
a day when you're 10 minutes off
from the rest of the world
and you're wondering
what in the hell is that smell
while your armpits are attached
to the shirt that you're wearing
under your favorite flannel also unwashed
button down
that you never button
and as you glance at yourself
in the mirror
for a brief moment
you think (I look cool)

a misplace~~d~~ testicle

until closer inspection
shows the pale
unshaven
unwashed
person in front of you
and your eyes look like
you got in a fight with a kangaroo
because
you decided to
stay up and watch a 10 yr. old bad movie
just because the co-star in it
is someone you recognize as being on your favorite show

a day when you got Jimi Hendrix's
Crosstown Traffic
stuck in your head
and failing miserably at trying to whistle it

and you run in to that person you
like so much
but
after seeing you
they stutter out some weak excuse
as to why they have to go
so

you start writing
not knowing whether
it's a story
song
or poem
but you realize
you're just rambling
and you think phrases like

misplaced testicle

are cool
and you're paralyzed with confusion

a day that can be summed up
by
the realization that

“I just have too much shit in my pockets.”

---- Matthew Tabin

When The Moon Spills All Over You

The dogs are lying in the sun. There is a kind of rhythm to the constant opening and closing of their eyes against the sun's rays. The wind is blowing and they raise their noses to sniff whatever is being carried on the wind. The wind is blowing and the sun is shining and the dogs are resting in the sun and the wind. Below me hang my feet that won't move, no matter how often my Mother calls to me. There are kittens here too, playing bite the tail, their own and each others. Neither animal seems to mind the other.

Samson is old and tired, now. He's not even capable of barking at the temple walls, much less knocking them down. I can't even remember the last time I heard a strong bark out of him. He's so quiet now, with only a whimper to acknowledge your presence and a weak thump of tail.

"It's time, Mikki," my Mom is always saying. But I haven't listened to my Mom in a very long time. Today seems different, Mom isn't giving up so easy. She'll find me soon, perched in the upper branches of the back yard maple. And the tree will get tired of hearing her call my name. It will allow the wind to separate it's branches and I will be exposed. But I plead with the maple to give me just a little more time as I cling to its trunk and whisper, "please, please, please."

Mom likes to say she was so pissed at Dad, the day he brought Samson home. She had only been home a week herself, after giving birth to me:

"And in strolled your Father, his lunch box in his right hand and a puppy clutched to his chest with his left. Well I'll tell you, I just lost it right then and there. I started screaming at your Daddy to take that dog right back where he got it from. You had been crying most of the night, Mikki, and almost all of the day by the time your Daddy came home. The last thing I needed to see was more work walking through the back door.

Mom usually stops the story right here and, she'll either mention how absolutely exhausted she was and how black the circles were under her eyes; and how I was such a crybaby. I don't know what she expected I was only a baby. Then she mentions how the startled expression in the puppy's eyes was exactly like the look in Daddy's eyes.

"Anyway," she starts again, your Daddy says: (Mom's real name is Adeline and her interpretation of Daddy's voice is incurably feminine.)

"Adeen! "" he has to talk more loudly because by now I, the baby, am screaming right along with Mom.

"Hand me the baby and you go upstairs, lie down and rest for a while." Mom likes to say she was crying uncontrollably right along with me. Daddy somehow managed to not let go of the squiggling puppy and scoop me out of Mom's arms all at the same time. Which is kind of when my Mom's careful sanitizing of me came to an abrupt end, because the puppy licked my tears and my face and my little hand closed securely around a clump of fur. My crying stopped and so did Mom's.

"Don't let the dog lick the baby's face, she'll get worms!"

"The baby won't get worms, Adeen, go lie down and take a nap, you'll feel better." Dad said he was sorry he made Mom take a nap that day. The nap lasted a day and half and he missed a day's pay.

Samson was about three when he found a wife. Mom watched as they strolled into the backyard from the vacant and unfarmed fields behind our house. The fields didn't belong to us. A farmer owned them, who received government money for not farming the land. When I was old enough to think about having an opinion, my folks agreed with me that it was a stupid waste of perfectly good farm land.

Mom said she watched from the window over the kitchen sink as Samson walked toward the back of the house with his skinny wife following closely behind. Each busily sniffing where their paws should go and each other. And all Mom could think of as she watched their leisurely pace, was that more work was about to scratch on the back door.

They never tried too hard to find Serena's owners. She was under fed and her fur was all matted and filthy, hiding numerous cuts, some healed, some not. No, they didn't try very hard at all. And Samson's wife became ours more quickly than Samson did.

The day Serena had her only litter of pups, Mom was baking pineapple upside down cake. The house smelled wonderful, while Samson paced and whimpered at the laundry room door. Mom had left some old towels on the floor, hoping Serena would take the hint. After the puppies were all born, Samson calmed down, stopped his pacing and licked Serena's face. He had to step gingerly over the babies. He had a kind of confused and bewildered expression on his face when he looked at Serena and all the little labors she had brought forth.

When the puppies were weaned, Mom took Serena off to the vet to get fixed. Mom said there would be no more females under her roof giving birth to ten babies at one time ever again, that for Serena to get pregnant again would be too much for all of us, especially Samson. We were able to give all the puppies away except one. We named him Pineapple.

I'm still a kid but Samson is actually old now. It's hard for him to walk, he's nearly blind in one eye and sometimes I think he doesn't hear too well anymore, either. I think the only sense still in place is smell. The vet says he has arthritis really bad and is surprised he can still go outside to relieve himself. That was a week

ago, the last time we saw the vet.

Last night I laid down beside Samson outside the back door. We watched the moon rise slowly and carelessly spill its light on Samson and me and the maple tree. Shadows lurked in the blackness beneath the lit branches.

I talked to Samson and apologized for all the pulled ears and pokes in the eye he suffered from my baby fingers. I thanked him for our long walks and adventures in the sleeping fields behind the house. Remembering all that I could about Samson and me, I talked long into the night. Remembering all, and telling it to him in quiet whispers. I ask him if he remembered the day all his children were born and Samson whispered to me in a whimper as moonlight spilled all around. He's been with me nearly all the days of my life, as Serena listens just inside the screen door. She wants to say good-by, too, but this is my time so she stays inside.

Realizing how different the sun and moon are, I came to the conclusion that after shining brightly for a while and exhausting itself, the moon must rest. It disappears for nights at a time.

"Mikki," my Mom calls from the foot of the tree.

"Please come down," and I recognize a plea in her voice and not a command. She needs me now. I know the vet has arrived. I heard the tires pull into the gravel of the driveway. Climbing down from the top and jumping the last few feet to the ground, I place my hand in Mom's and we slowly walk to the back of the house. She needs me now, she hasn't had time to say good-bye like I did last night, when the moon carelessly spilled its light all around.

---Cheryl Belknap

infinity

I had a vision and in that vision came a spirit a spirit that knew and called my name out loud and outside the boundaries and comfort of my room room to move about so untamed was frightening but still he and I we ventured he smiled I laughed we shared an encounter only known by us a love unlimited unlimited by sex and tears but he cried and we made love a love so free that when we returned to my room it was no longer mine not mine but ours and still we lifted from it as if in a dream a dream of two spirits two spirits who knew each other well

---- Angelia L. McGirt

Neptune's Kisses

Her thick blonde river of hair
runs over her shoulders, onto the ground.
Her bronzed olive skin
offers the perfect contrast to her brilliant green eyes.
She arches her back on the obsidian beach,
half in a stretch, half offering to the sky.
The rolling tides rush toward and away
from her in an endless struggle between
passion and morality.
Her nude figure glows as she stands
and strides toward Mighty Neptune.
The black sand is sucked from her
by his passionate kisses.
He is content now
Because she is his forever.

---- Matt Doucette

Holocaust

Because you taught me hunger
And forbade my mouth lore
I came back to this idle figure
Came back opaque lover
Shedding my skin
Stripping off my war

Naked of our plague
And certain annihilation
I came back a bound slave

Shackled and somber
I came back to this figure
Because you taught me lust
Came back opaque lover
In sublime fever
To a holocaust of us

---- Brandy Sejeck

Cookin'

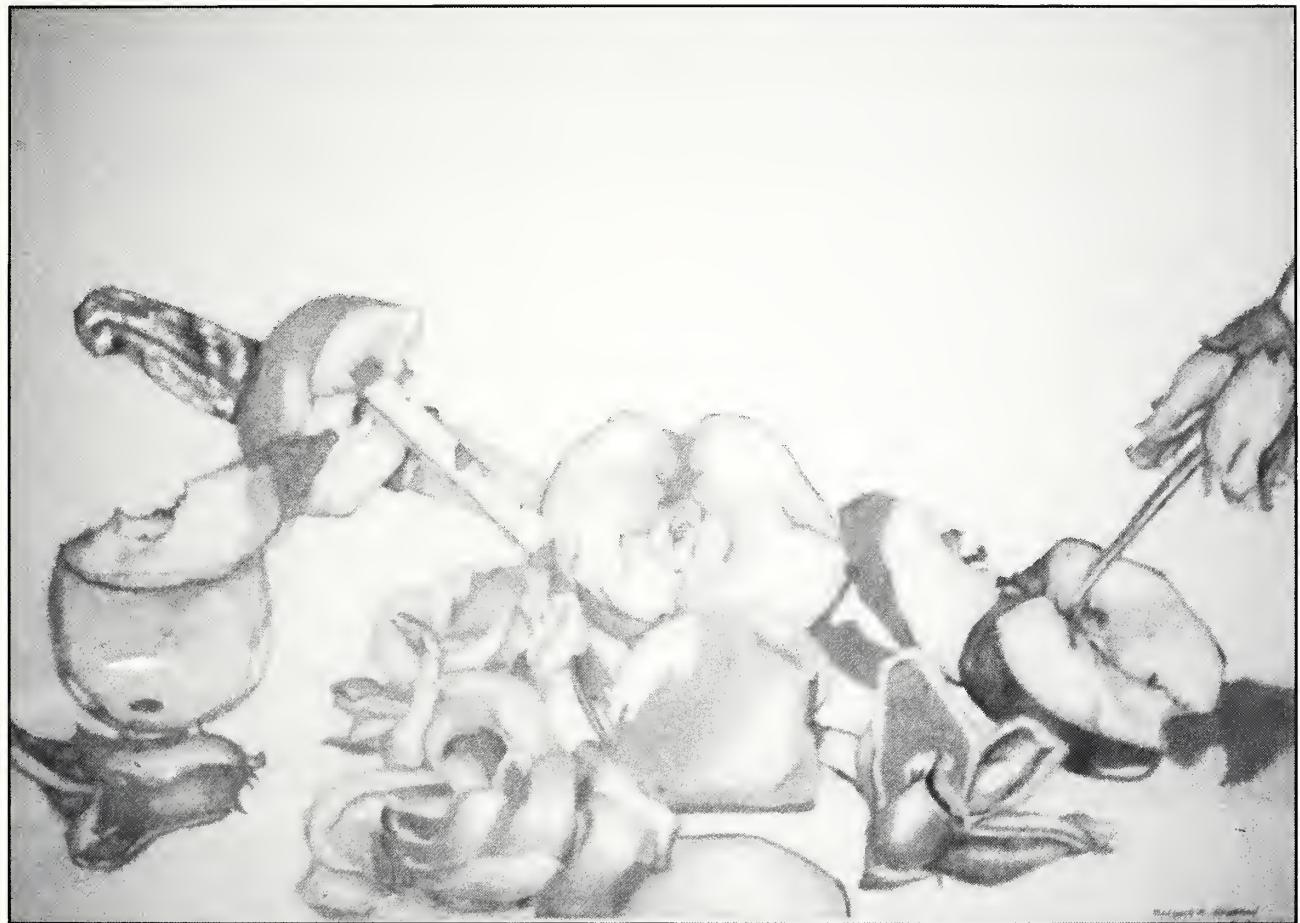
"I dun nuttin wrong," Edith whines
her forest of hair mussed with clear
sweat, grey streaks leaping from her roots.
Yellow corn bread bakes in the gas oven
and ham bubbles on the stove in a cast iron
pot. Hunched like witch, she stirs
collard greens with wooden spoon.
"Mmm. mmm, mmm," Edith hums in a high-
pitched praise.

"Dumb bitch." Carl Lee mumbles, folding
he sports page on his lap, his fat
ass embedded in his red recliner torn
with burned holes from his smoking pipe.
His vanilla palm swipes a buzzing bee
from his bushy skun brows. Forehead
wrinkled with complaints, he brushes
perspiration from his sagging cheek.
"Damn woman! I ax you for a glass
of lemonade!"
"Yes Carl Lee I's commin'."
Edith whirls at his feet
with sore giant steps, ice
cubes jingling in the glass.
"Danx bitch. Thought I had
to come over dere and whup yo ass."

Edith closes her eyes, nods her head
like a black stallion, wobbles back
to her blue shrine, her voodoo doll
of green beans, black-eyed peas, okra,
fried chicken, and hot vinegar dressing.
She shaves pieces of smoked ham with
humiliation, her knife sharp as Carl
Lee's tongue. Edith's good cooking
will lift the curse.

"Lords knows I got no strength to eat"
She remarks to the gravy boat.
A cluttered table later, Edith cracks
her knuckles, massages her knees,
Carl Lee's slumped face down in a ceramic
plate of her southern magic. She grates
her scalp, nudges at his shoulder.
"What's wrong Carl Lee? My cookin'
aint that bad!" She hollars, grins
like a Chesire-cat, rocks in wheezes
of laughter.

----Natalie Kappes



Untitled

Tiffanie M. Johnson

The Crime

I saw it with my own eyes I tell you! It was murder. Cold blooded murder! In broad daylight. I watched as his tiny body buckled under the extreme pressure. "The life was just snuffed out of him," the speaker said, while peering into the now large crowd gathered around where the murder had taken place hours earlier. Women who had been following closely to his every word now cast their eyes away eager to look elsewhere, anywhere but into the speaker's eyes. It was as if they could see the expression on the deceased's face as he lay there motionless.

Now, which of you will sit idly by while this happens to our young and our old, day after day? He posed the question to everyone, but it seemed as if he was only speaking to the males who shook their heads in unison, shaking their fists as if vowing to never let anything like this happen again. He paused for a moment then said, "Will you only be concerned when it directly affects you? When it is your sibling or neighbor who is the slain?" Again the audience nodded heads in agreement while he spoke; not everyone knew what course of action needed to be taken, but all agreed that a change was needed. As he continued to speak, his voice cracked and his eyes appeared to tear.

He was a brilliant speaker, and just by his stature he commanded respect and the right to be heard. His oratory skills were lauded everywhere he went. And though he had no formal education, he spoke eloquently and always knew how to best give voice to the troubles and concerns of the little guys. He was raised on a farm along with numerous brothers and sisters. One day while he was far out in the fields, the farm and

everyone in it was demolished. The elders, from another town, who were present at the time of the incident, told him that a natural disaster was to blame for his becoming an orphan. They were really kind to him after that because although he was not directly related to any one of them, they still saw him as family and part of the community. So they taught him about life and raised him. One day he overheard some of the elders speaking about what really happened that day his parents died. From that day on he vowed to fight against those who were responsible.

So there he stood, years later, in the hot sun, speaking into a crowd that ran the gamut of his community. As he spoke of the terrors and the injustices brought on his kind, passers bye in cars never even stopped to hear what he had to say or even acknowledge his presence. It was as if he and his kind didn't exist. Noticing this, he spoke on the matter; "See how they just walk by without a word of sympathy like they just don't care what happens to us! Do we not both inhabit the earth? do we not both bleed? what makes their lives any more important than ours? If we were to stand as one and be counted, we would more than outnumber them. But yet they still treat us as if our segment of the population doesn't count."

As he spoke, people going to and from work, and some out to gather food, who identified with him, would stop to hear what he had to say. As the sun heated up so did his words. "They say that we just walk the earth with no direction, and we are stealing and pillaging with no organization or discipline. This is not true. The poorer of us have been reduced to having to

make use of what they discard. Some among us look for scraps in garbage cans and others for food left on the side walk. None among us has ever taken anything out of the mouth of one of them. But that is what they would have you believe. Why do they tell lies against us? They say that we just run amok all over the planet, but this is not the case. Most of us work for the benefit of the entire community, while there are some who deviate from this plan; it is not unlike what is happening in their society. So why is it that when it happens among us, it is seen as ever so much more heinous? Most of us have a queen and we treat her with the utmost respect while I see most of their men walking with a different woman every time I see them. Yet, with all of this in our defense even the least important of them can come and destroy whole towns, and we have no recourse. Just because they are bigger than we, does that give them the right to murder us at any point at any time night our day without any punishment? Are our lives not just as important as theirs"? By this time the audience was captivated, hanging on his every word. They were so riled up that they would have followed him into a hole in the ground if he had led them there.

He said, "Just once I wish that one of them would be served an injustice like we witnessed with the loss of that young victim's life today. Just once I would like for one of them to get a taste of their own medicine." It seems as if someone or something heard what he was saying, because moments later a well dressed man walked slowly out of the building in front of which the crowd had gathered. "Why that's him! He was the

man from earlier!" the speaker frantically said, kind of startled and kind of shocked that he was actually seeing the person again. People in the crowd quickly swiveled their heads to get a look at the alleged murderer. That's the cul.... before he could fashion his lips to say culprit, the man in the suit took a step off the sidewalk and into the middle of the street. No sooner did his foot hit the pavement, than a semi tractor trailer materialized out of nowhere, striking the man and killing him instantly. The man, now under the truck, was dragged a few feet down the road and then the truck, just as it came, seemed to disappear into thin air.

Women shouted for help and screamed at the horror of what they had just witnessed. People from all of the adjoining buildings came outside to see what the commotion was all about. A crowd was now forming around the body of one of their own. While those who had been there mourning the earlier loss, rushed up the block to see what had happened. While people were peering at the man, the ambulance arrived. Insignificant to them, but of monumental importance to the likes of the speaker and his kind, was the bottom of the man's shoes. Because as the women in his group gasped and the men shook their heads, on the bottom of the man's left shoe right next to the heel, was the evidence to support the speaker's claim and convict the man. "There is your son Mrs. Smith!" the speaker shouted, on the bottom of the dead man's shoe was the dismembered body of a fire ant.



Connection

Brian Lee

Super Squeak

Eeeeecccchhhhhh.

BUMS into the morning hell

STRETCH, piss, and eat a tasty donut only two days old

THE people pass as he waddles to the corner to do number two

ONLY roaches and fleas accompany him on the voyage to displace

THING of beauty as he seems to fair his shit

BETWEEN trips of need he stands still as to wait for a lost master as a dog does
POVERTY reminds him of where he is

AND only minutes from his kingdom throne, glancing to his corner

LAZINESS pulls him to the floor till he can rise up and go away from the trains

WITH which that they have done for him, bringing him there and all

THEIR, he feels as people look in disgust at him if only they slept where he did

MINDS keep him piled, hurt and fuck you's form his fracas all the way to avenue

AND there the cold is fresh, not heavy, viewing the street pole at which he will
sit

EMPTY pockets still fossil of hot wallys and brews

WALLETS held tight as onwalkers gaze at the poor poor man they call humble

IT is there at the pole he found company and clutched the book near

IS that a humble bum or a greedy man in fear of losing what is not his

JUST now he has something that male can construct

HUNGER for knowledge keeps him moving while he escapes in his stoop.

NIGHT pulls him away from the Poe, Yeats, Miller, and other strangers

THOUGHTS trance him back to the call of the trains and

STINKS reminding him of his throne and tracks to wander

FOR the Ave is not safe for such an easy target

IT seems the tunnels are home to him and his friends too

CASES of used condoms line the columns of loggy steps

HATE those little flies that fart in his face and follow his ass

AND dick to all those lights down his hall that keep him awake

DISGUST to all those still working and not for him- till its time

AGAIN in too short a stay -, to sleep under the feet of millions

under the feet of millions

---- Aaron Kent

Godnoise

Great cloudless skyvoid
silently blanketing gentle earth
protecting covering the countless lost in themselves
The Countless wonder why they know what they know
and struggle to figure out what they don't know
They do know they seek Master's guidance
and they seek to know Master's name
One says, "Master is called Jesus."
"No", says another, "Master is called Allah."
"Yahweh is Master's name", cries yet another voice!
Soon all begin screaming, yelling, killing over How to address Master
Suddenly a voice reaches the top and says, "I don't think Master really
cares!"
For a moment, silence
Then the yelling, screaming, killing begins again

---- Matt Doucette



Your Country Needs You

Linnea Barry

Can't Stop the Pop

Can't stand a cop who tries
to stop

the pop of
this tail

Let 'em barbwire the handrails

I'll
S
L
I
D
E

D
O
W
N
Uncut.

They can block off the street
cut off my feet
I'll sk8 prosthetic
their shit is pathetic
employ fake cops to stand watch over what?
Not money or gold or something that can be stole, but concrete and steel
Run me out like a 2nd class citizen

Look at the shit I'm in:

On my knees
board by my side!
Cops above
guns by their side!

Inequality is a reality for those that lack a fat \$alary Sk8 and Destroy
Not this boy

Sk8 to create—life
hate a cop who causes me strife
Runnin' my name
Trying to place blame
For the problem of today's young
Bitin' my tongue Let it pass
Let it pass
Take the ticket for trespass
Bloated cops give me gas!!

---- Steve Buxton

As Against Future Need

No convictions just endless esteemed addictions aided with anti venom
because the care free poisons swarm without restrictions

Dragging a shit box of collectables the environment holds you
for treason driven by an asset to acquire your determined to prove your
capable of output beyond a recyclable reason

Pedestrians stamped the litter thrown in disgust resumed in their private
crosswalk adhering to the fashion tabloids they so want to trust

Compared to nature we are the threat and every shame uncounted retires
to a selfish bet

Discriminative say so's work to pay the status accepted rent and our rea-
son for time enduring lashed with this arrogant scent

and when you reach this fork thrown in the way don't choose the view,
and awake to this vanishing day

---- Leslie Odom



Paradise

Kelly Norona

Vagaries of Humanity

A vagrant asks a passerby for a quarter and is told to get a job. He nearly responds "try walking in my shoes," until he realizes he hasn't got any on.

Two blocks later the homeless man finds a body in a dumpster. He cautiously looks both ways and then claims the corpses shoes for his own. And this is a good day.

Three miles south, a baby cries as her teenage mother, who never wanted the responsibility, sells the child to a man in black for a few rocks of crack.

Four years of slave labor comes to an end for several aliens as a sting operation finally unfolds. The freedom is bittersweet. Next week they will be deported by U.S. officials.

Five stars on his shoulder, the retired general tries to chase away the atrocities he authorized during his military career, with bourbon, scotch, beer and lies.

Between tomorrow and today, lies the Now. Today will be remembered tomorrow, and tomorrow will be remembered one day, but Now; Now is the time to change.

---- Steve Coate

Light

Rays of light emitting
From a black hole, they're omitting
A million bright ambassadors of day.

Colors fade and shapes form, Shadows passing through the storm, Infinitely taking me away.

All are seen, yet none are heard Streams of crystal, golden bird, Traversing deserts, valleys, seas, and plains.

Across my field of view they deal
Cards of suits that soon reveal
Magnificent arrays of spinning gray.

3D art and architectures, Sounds of bells and pointless lectures, Filling this great room with depth and pane.

Suddenly the room turns dark, Filled with black, this sad remark, The dream had passed and light has flown away.

---- Kevin Simpson



Untitled

Christine Albert

Reflection

*Get to know yourself as you would another person
Know that within each of us emanates the essence of a god
See the tapestry of life through the mind's eye,
more subtle than nature
Hear the voices of your ancestors,
more gentle than thought
Throughout the noise and confusion that is life,
seek the tranquillity of the soul
Hold fast to what is true,
and always remember who you are*

---- Eric Peters

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The Broward Community College Student Literary/Arts Magazine





Editorial

As editor of the spring issue of P'an Ku 1998, I would like to take this opportunity and share with my student body something that means a whole lot of something to BCC and the staff of P'an Ku. During the 1997 school year, P'an Ku staff has done nothing but concentrate on putting together the magazine for all of you who take interest. I must mention that many hours of our fun Saturdays have been occupied by P'an Ku. I have to admit that the decision making was one of the hardest jobs ever to do. I just never realized that there were so many talented students who attended BCC. To reject a piece of work was very heartbreaking. In the end it all worked out for the best. At the Ocala convention for Literary/Art magazines, P'an Ku came home with eleven awards. The most valuable award we won was the "General Excellence award". I was very proud of those who helped work to make the magazine.

Our main concern though is the thought carried by those of you who take the time to read P'an Ku. A variety of stories, poems, and pictures were chosen for the students by the students. So, as you read through P'an Ku, I pray that points in which have never been revealed to you before will become a strong realization to you and may God willing make a difference in your lives in some way or another.

*Your Editor,
Krystine Ramos*

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Front Cover Art

"Jewel" - Adrienne Chadwick

Back Cover Art

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False Prophets

Where are the poets?

Where are the seers and guides of souls?

What happened to subtle beauty: Nature?

What hand could better the work of God?

When did we lose the world?

Whose care did we entrust it to?

When you look at this land do you see its essence?

Where does greed end?

When the land is gone, will you cry for it?

Will you accept its death at your hands?

Why do you doom us all?

Where is your creation, developer-man?

Where is your achievement, government-man?

Has this become our vision?

Where are the poets?

- Phillip W. Doherty

“I don’t get this poetry thing” he said.

Savoring solitude
Chain of thought intact
Composing creative ramblings,
editing stream of consciousness
into poetic master pieces

Reaching out through inhibitions
to touch a nerve
facilitate a reaction

Searching for that elusive word
that completes
the phrase that says it all
Waiting for us to hit us on the head
Like Newton’s apple

Avoiding the despair of being misunderstood
By those who love us but will never know
intense introspection

Seeking union with those that appreciate our mentality
Intuitive mind set that only another poet comprehends
Perceiving that exceptional wavelength as our eyes meet.

- Elizabeth Rhodes



Which Way?

Leslie L. Odom

Untitled

If for some highly unexplainable and unlikely reason the stars should collide and wipe us from this earth, promise to me that you will have held my hand long enough to last me throughout my next lifetime.

If for some unfortunate and unlikely reason some god should grab you from my arms and hide you in heaven, promise to me that you will have painted me enough pictures so that I may wallpaper the rest of my life with your memories.

And if the same unfortunate incident should occur and take me from you and you are left alone, promise to me that if you choose to share the rest of your days with another you will not totally give your heart away to them as you have done for me.

If for some reason night should fall and I not visit you in a dream, pray for the morning so that you may wake lying against me.

Promise this to me as I make these promises for us.

- Jill Francisco

King

alone am I, for mother is overseas
and father has long bolted his castle gate
if only she would send a bottle through the waves
or if his mistress would end siege
instead I am exiled and loneliness is my faith

what will I do when the wind stops blowing
what will I do when the bells cannot be heard
will I weep till my eyes run like the blood of slaves
or do I take my place, among men who awaited my beheading
but now they wait patiently to hear my every word

now I stand mightier than ever before
having freed myself of both liquor and whore
tonight my sons rise and become brave
in light of dawn, let the angels sing
for as the sun sets his sail, I am King

- the poeT



Rose, Wine & Fruit

Oakley Chance

The Call of Israel

**Shadows of antiquity corrode the rock of lime.
Voices of the past resound through out the span of time
I hear my fathers father call Hear Me!
The way of truth is ours. Stand tall!**

**Within the relics of lost centuries they speak.
The tombs and temples, now found, do leak
A potion that makes my heart to overflow.
A joining in the march of long ago.**

**I hear the voice of Moses speak the law.
I see Abraham s pain as he kneels in awe,
Receiving G-d s word to slay his seed.
Then Joshua s trumpet call that he will lead.**

**Among dark Catacombs the prophets lie
Their wisdom motivates our lives and will not die.
Only here, in Israel, do we feel that call.
The arms of Yahweh do enfold us all.**

- Allen D. Greenstone

Little Things

She left the other day.
She said she wasn't coming back.
She said she never wanted to see him again.
She said she didn't know what she saw
 in him anyway.
She said she should have listened to her
 mother.

He said fine.
He said go, if you want to.
He said , makes no difference to me.
He said it must have been his ability to
 put up with her.
He said her mother's an idiot.

She said she hates the way she combs his hair.
She said she hates the way that his
 clothes are always wrinkled.
She said she hates the way he'd kiss her
 forehead when she has a headache.
She said she hates his cooking.
She said his backrubs are no good.

He said he hates the way she stretches
 when she wakes up.
He said he hates the one strand of hair
 that hangs out of her ponytail.
He said he hates the way her eyes
 scrunch up when she laughs.
He said he hates her cooking.
He said her kisses are flat.

She said she was leaving.

He said then leave.

- Matt Doucette



Plastic Vixen

Erin Blanton

Dream of the Oasis

Wind dances with dust
small graceful strokes,
a chorus of brushes,
moving across a black canvas.
Circles of light,
jump off the horizon.
I run at it,
but still it eludes me.

In this dry land
the sun burns my flesh,
and the moon brings
cold darkness.

I nurse my wounds
and slumber
while buzzards watch,
to see if I forgot to wake.
Still, I sleep until
I'm startled by
the dream of the oasis.

- Dane McGuckian

Midnight Day Dreams

12:35

I'm home early.
It's usually one or two.
It doesn't matter either way I guess,
I never sleep anyway.
I can think better then, when the night drowns the day.
Sheets of black cloud my mind
and I sit on my bed,
looking at the white twinkle lights
hanging from the clouds.
The midnight jazz is playing.
REAL JAZZ
not that daytime, easy listening crap.
I close my eyes and let the midnight sounds
of Duke Ellington
and Count Basie fill my head,
and for a moment,
I see that world far beyond the one
in which I sit.
It calls my name
beckoning me to embrace it,
as I sit in this room
in this house of mine.
My parent's dream,
not mine.
In my midnight world,
a world all my own
I see my city
filled with thousands of people
who all had MY same dreams
at my age.
Twinkle lights
hang from the clouds,
and the sheets of black
cover my dreams
keeping them safe
from a world I can not yet
call my own.

- Helen Anne Kirifides



Window

Michael Susi



Psycho

Sandra Dee Lopez

Which one are you? (To all the brothers from a brother)

Man: Opening the door for a lady.

Boy: Walking behind as if a child.

Man: Pulling out her seat at the dinner table.

Boy: Sitting down first as if she didn't exist.

Man: Excusing yourself after every belch.

Boy: Laughing hard and attracting attention.

Man: Intelligent conversations during and after dinner.

Boy: When spoken to not paying attention

Man: Paying the bill when the dinner is done.

Boy: Asking the waiter/waitress for separate checks.

Man: Walking her to the front door.

Boy: Dropping her off at the bus stop, five miles from home.

“One of those days”

It's gonno be one of those doys:

You get up ond moke the coffee,
Then collopse ot the kitchen table
Inholing the vapors ond waiting for the stimulation
Only to hear dripping thot doesn't sound right
You realize you forgot to put the pot on
ond your precious brew is now on the floor.

Then you go to read the poem that you wrote
ot 4 o. m. when you couldn't sleep ond
discover thot your pen hod been out of ink.
The mood ond thought process gone.
Meonwhile, you consider the poem
one or those intellectual ramblings
thot you call a masterpiece.

And it's almost your birthday
so you go to the gym
and your talking to that new young troiner
ond he osks if he knows your doughter.

So you leave to go get some lunch
ond when you open the cor door
the 40 mile on hour breeze
whisks your papers off the dash
There goes the phone message
for thot job offer (\$\$\$).
Stunned, disbelief os it flies ocross the parking lot
running after it you trip ond skin your knee.
Bleeding, totally frustrated:
watching it take flight ocross University Drive.
Standing there in dismal stote of mind
you realize you locked your keys in the car.

- Elizabeth Rhodes



Untitled

Kevin Roman



Rosey

Joann Gay

Jelly Bean Love

**My lips twitch when touched by one,
I hold them in my skirt,
My hand gripping the gathered hem,
I become irresistibly moist.**

**I gnaw and suck to ease my nerves,
The satisfaction you give me,
Is minimal.
I guess that explains the crankiness.**

**The flavor means less than the texture,
Feels like humming,
Dependable, indifferent, no risk.**

- Stefanie Posteraro

LOVE SONG (Anniversary)

I remember that night so long ago

There was something in the air
not the heat or the mist
but that element
that makes lovers fuck
like wild creatures
and murderers giggle
like mad, little children

maybe that's why I smiled
when you came to the door
so lovely in my scarlet dress
so somber with my secret smile

and I wondered if she knew
where you were tonight

was I your misdemeanor
was I your only sin
that one expression that nobody else could see

I asked you if you
knew what day it was

your mouth grew tense
as my tongue brushed your lips
and your muscles tightened
when I wrapped myself around you
searching for a way in
hoping for that slight intoxication
release from all others
submission to my opium

just as you eased
so secure inside of me
I whispered in your ear
who are you thinking about

I felt you pull back
tried to push me away
but I held on
not ready to let go

the blade was sharp
you didn't see it coming
deeper and further
twisting and turning
caught in your web
of your broken skin

your breath grew short and suffocated
such a wonderful orgasm
as I saw myself smile
in your half-dead eyes
that final intimacy
between two lovers

I watched your blood trickle down my thigh

today there is a woman
who still mourns
covered in black veils
charcoaled eyes
pale blue lips

she visits you
but only after I do
I sit among your grave
reminisce about our old times

"Do you know what day it is?"

- Alyssa Yankwitt



Stigmata

Egan Saint-Smith

Five-Hundred Thousand Butterflies

**Five-hundred thousand butterflies
Drifting through the fading skies
Hearing the haunting sea breeze sighs
As the sunlight slips, and falls, and dies**

**The tattered darkness is draping the hills
While rainbow liquor from silvery stills
Trickling through as miniature tills
The burnt brown earth providing its frills**

**After time passed the darkness abates
And the gold coin sun finally awakes
Behemoth rises with a shuddering shake
And the liquor has slipped into the lake**

**Fortune rules life rather than wisdom
The fortune has gone the wisdom shall come
All of the parts worth more than the sum
The pie is cut but missing the plum**

**Trampled beneath abraceleted hoof
Through the kaleidoscope is not the truth
Creation's not the only proof
All is not under the celestial roof**

**Five-hundred thousand butterflies
Drifting through the fading skies
Hearing the haunting sea-breeze sighs
In the end will slip, and fall, and die**

- David Y. Goodman

Fantasy-Prone Personalities

Whispering ever so lightly
So I can feel your breath upon my neck
Teasing me with your tantalizing tongue
as you lick my ear
I stand erect
Knowing you'll be gone tomorrow
my thoughts become a mess
I want to be with you
and not be disregarded in yesterdays trash
You decide my fate and I control your destiny
I still remember our last kiss
to those I am sure it will never be missed
From day one I outline our lips
and placed them upon mine
Transcending what I had wanted in time
neglecting what wasn't mine
to decide
though how I tried
before your eyes to portray
the person you wanted me to be
Coming to a realization
I could never be a lie for anyone
who overlooked the real me
You let the cloth fall upon your eyes
and truth became a fantasy
of a trip you never took
because you were to busy being
a hypocrite
to see past your own lies
your wine glass remains unsipped
but you stand before me
as a
drunken prick

- Joy Dietz

Electric Mourning

....electric morning once again
you knock on my bedroom window
before the crack of dawn
pounding your fist into my skull
I beg you let me sleep some more
I've counted every little, white,
popcorn-looking thing
my ceiling can hold
still you fall to your knees
and demand that I run away from you
lightning crashes in my brain
Reason and logic have run away again
cheated from another sleepless night
I reluctantly take your hand
you pull me close kissing my neck
whispering soft prayers in my ear
you try to rouse my torso
I've been here before
in this sick, twisted memory
searching for some way out
maybe if I cry a little bit louder
this time it won't be a rape
But you've already used your erection
for the day
you only get one chance
hands red and swollen, callused
you seduce yourself so very well
still you manage to crawl inside of me
filling every orifice
fingering every feminine mound of flesh
fucking your way through my force
and I
I am sick envy and grief
excited and scared
stimulated and scorned
rising and falling
with breath and breathlessness
motions moving me
rhythm pounding me
veins ready to explode
the moment of connection
an instant before the orgasmic convul-
sion
you disappear

forsaking my climax
you leave me
electrified and grieving
I don't even get a kiss goodnight
crawling through my bedroom window
every little popcorn-looking thing
is still there
my mind is violated of all thoughts
somewhere
I can hear you laughing
wondering if I'll ever fall asleep
I blanket myself with shame
even a shower couldn't rid
of this rancid stench
I know what happens next
it happens every time
another piece shatters
and something else inside
just disintegrates into oblivion
eyes slowly closing
maybe just a remnant of a dream
isn't that always the way
electric mourning once again...

- Alyssa Yankwitt

Paint Me Unconscious

Sweltering tongues with burning desires caresses the body's
unconscious

Awakening desires unknown to the mind's eye

Lethargic accumulation fosters sobriety from a lifetime of drunkenness
Hearts afire with emotions undiscovered

Erotic dreams of nakedness and intimacy never imagined

Forbidden fruit and dances accelerates brain waves-positively

Paradise of subdued desires lunge to heaven's door where the wrong key
fits.

Passionate nights lit with the beams of orgasmic sensations

Sun-drenched mornings bring forth a class at 8 a.m.

Paint me unconscious - it was just getting good?!

- Decia Smith

Invalidation

Rape is the violation of the body.

Murder is the violation of life.

LIES are the violation of the soul.

- Margarita J. Fraser



Tear Drop

Adrienne Chadwick



Untitled

Kevin Ramon

Balance

*So far in - he was me -
As if just for a moment - transformed -
Into eternity.*

*Songs around us played -
Touching me - burning me -
Making me - God.*

*Thoughts of one evening - broken -
Fragile child of man's insanity -
Years of my - Morning - wasted.*

*The toy of doves - I am the Pig of the mind -
Bathe in red as if Death - had met -
me - in Heaven.*

*Clouds gather near - Herd in the sky -
Blocking the light from the Sun - and I -
cry - from the pain that I feel - In and Out.*

*Changing the Road - that I walk -
by painting it night with black and gray -
I find myself at Infinity.*

*We rest at a spot - along the Milky Way -
and I run free to chase a fantasy -
and Phase Four begins - I cry help - into Forever.*

*And so ends the Dream - I see -
Humanity has lost his balance with me -
and I sit shattered - alone -*

*So I run away far - or I'm taken -
To a special little place in the universe -
and I fall dead on my face -
I meet Death on the Rock of Reality -
and the World goes dark...*

- Kevin Simpsen

Tangled

*She approaches
crawling over
sticky lacework,
a ballerina
dancing on piano strings.*

*Each slender leg
tightropes its way.
I tug, ply, and kick
There is no escape.
The air smells of
vaginal glue.
I'm shackled.
Sewn in a warm
sticky cocoon.*

*She opens the enclosure.
Peering through
eyelids half cemented shut,
I watch a woman,
dark and leggy.
While she affectionately
punctures my pale wrist
and drinks.*

- Dane McGuckian

The Ole Gray

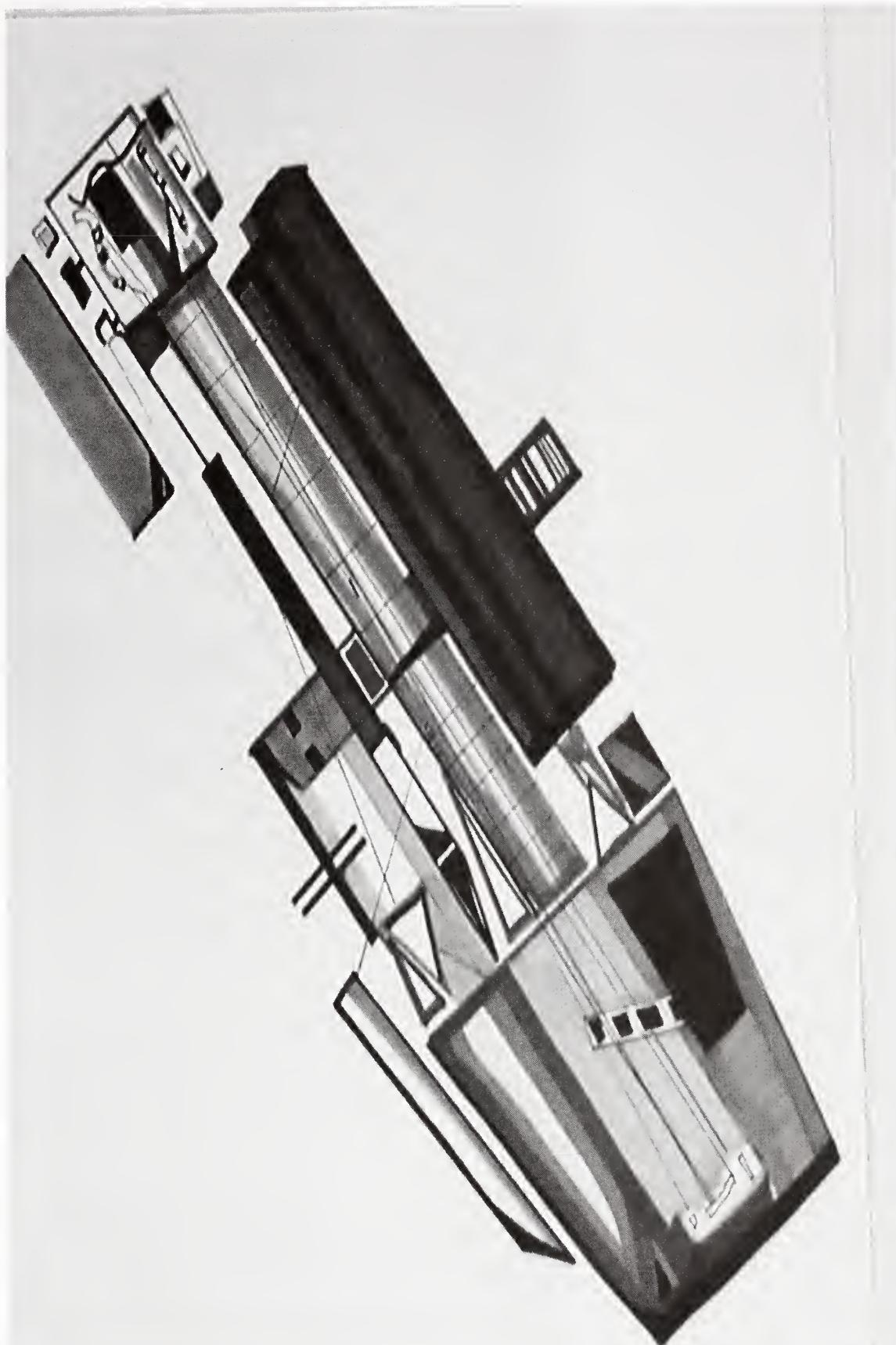
Painfully organ donating and
Contributing to the gross national product
Isn't it amazing
The cows keep grazing,
Don't they know that the fatter they get
That the pushing demand for burger combo's
Will soon be met
Do they think the pasture is rent free?
Believed to be loved beyond a cash degree
That the biting fence
Is there to protect
So the gals don't shed a tear
And look forward to the bulls erect
Driving by in a fast food frenzy
Looking past the massacre
And further into a tasty lunch,
Like carnivores thirsty for blood
Ketchup enhances the reason
for our feverish munch
Today I witnessed a herd gathered
Under a golden arches billboard
And as usual no cows play on death row
So when the ole gray ain't what she used to be,
sauced into extinction
I hope for human sake
that vegetables will taste great.

- Leslie L. Odom



Untitled

Stefanie Posteraro



1968 Gibson

David Goodman

HOPE

I've been complimented on this beauty that my parents say I've inherited. I've been complimented on the things I wear, but the most shocking is how people can compliment me for just being me.

"You have so much potential" others have said, but with MY eyes I see pain. I see loneliness, I see a little girl surrounded by the lies this world creates.

Some say creativity is having an imagination for the things that are not real...I have none.

Reality hit the little girl inside of me with hypocrisy and sin and death, mysteries unsolved because of the untruths of this generation. "What happens next?" I ask myself. The only answer that enters my mind is.... I DON'T KNOW!

Can time tell? No. Only my next step towards adulthood can answer the question.

So I sit, and wait and believe that one day I will say thank you to the next compliment given instead of saying nothing.

- Krystine Ramos

To Those Who Love Me

Last night I sat drinking in a male Latino bar.
The voice of the machismo man curling around the tips of my earlobes
his songs dangling like earrings,
heavy and sexual.

It felt good to escape
a mute and deaf nobody
sitting alone
and enjoying it.

For just a few minutes
I left this ridiculous country
called sexual abuse
which I have pledged to fight against
I'm on this mercenary mission.

couldn't find a man to kill me
couldn't trip long enough to forget
couldn't drink myself into ignorance

So, I decided to join the army of survivors and fight.
This is why I stand before you
"naked poetry"
pouring out of me like sweat.
but sometimes it's too much for these broad shoulders.
so I dream of shotguns
and sleeping pills
or maybe a long swim to the great Ocean spirit.
I hear her calling my name.
so I don't go there anymore...
the beach my favorite place...
or rest.

So please don't patronize me,
telling me it will be okay.
'Cause it's not
and never will be.
I'm still learning to wear this weight.
A serf
indentured to all the pedophiles,
who keep on spreading the plague.

- Valerie Kelly

South Campus Writing

First Place Poetry “Untitled”

I long for you to leave your clumsy estate
Not even the bellboy could carry the luggage
under your eyes
I wait for you in moist soil
In the monogamy of sadness and polka-dot cries

There is no reward for mortality, just forgiveness
for being selfish
I rise and in my gentle mist I swim through your
rooms
I feel your panic as I motion to press your lips
With the grace of this cold one, in death, in
bloom

In the dawn of morning you come to waltz on
me
Shamed and bewildered the caretakers look on
When will you soon expire, months, days, weeks
I long for your mist, so we can spin and dance
the night along

I will rest and turn and curse the day my soul
dropped
Keep on good woman, dance long and gracefully
on my gravetop

- Sivan Alamary

Second Place Poetry “My Life”

Is my life a dream or is it real,
I would like to know and forget how I feel
Hoping one day I'll be able to walk on my two
feet,
But since I can't, I'll just continue riding in my
wheelchair
In the middle of streets
I know it's not my fault
I can't walk
But who's to blame? No one,
I have sense, I'm not dumb
I'm always striving to be on top
No one or my disability can make me stop
People ask me how do I feel because of the way
I am,
I really don't give a damn
As long as you respect me for who I am,
And treat me like a man
First I was nothing,
Now I draw to be something
Writing poetry on what's on my mind
Is to express myself, some isn't nice and some is
kind
The only thing that matters that it's mine,
I'm doing it to be on top and let myself shine
Never asking for help,
Trying to do it myself
Cause that's just me,
I feel like I'm in a jail cell waiting to get free
Wondering will my life go further than where it
is now,
or will I be dead 10 years from now
So it's best to start my career,
Cause I might not be here
I'm in danger, but the bible says "Thou shalt not
fear"
No one, if you have a problem then come on
I'm not afraid to die, I'd rather go fly,
In the clouds of heaven above,

Contest Winners

It won't be easy because I'll show you what I'm made of
Take me for a joke if you want me to,
You don't even know me so fuck you
That's the kind of attitude you need to live your life,
I talk shit, but trust me, you wouldn't want to live my life.

- Joey Machado

3rd Place Poetry “Ode to the Artist Dedicated to Rob & Mercy”

Anticipation; waiting; a shiver
Watching him work, methodic, quick.
Yet in slow motion
One layer at a time
This, and that, and then...
PENETRATION
it burns it rips it tugs it tears
As though almost
Leviathan himself were stroking me,
gently
My skin grows fat
My blood is shed
His work is that of a poet with a
mechanical pen
The ink is his blood
My blood the sacrifice
Painfully shed, transferred
Blood and Ink, Ink and Blood
Swirling, mixing, dripping
Like the sweat off the brow of
overworked worker
We are bonded, connected.
The torturer and his ever willing
victim
Masochistic sadistic artist
Who marries me to my skin
A priest: he makes the oblivious
obvious
And forever I will be
a canvas of flesh
For you; my artist with ink and needle
My poet with the mechanical pen
Your work resides on me
Forever
Long past my earthly departure
Till my skin is naught by
dust

- Jennifer Albert

North Campus “Writes Of Spring” Contest Winner

First Place Limericks “Limericks”

There was a young fellow named Buffett
Whose pillow was too flat to fluff it.
His wife grew annoyed,
Claimed his skull was a void;
Quoth Buffett, “Don’t like it ? Then stuff it!”

Jack was an old man from Fife.
Who took a young lass for a wife.
When asked if he worried
‘Bout soon being buried,
Jack quipped, “That’s a double-edged knife!”

- Michael J. Galka

Fear

Paranoid about everything
In fear that everyone is out to get me
 Men want to drug and rape me
 God wants to sent me to hell
 Everyone wants me poor and needy
The bookstore wants me to have only new books
 All men and women lie to me
 My boyfriends want to cheat
 And this palm tree wants to crush me
 What a way to live
 In absolute fear and paranoia
 Will It drive me mad
Will I transfer, to a room of white padded walls
 Yet another fear
 That haunts me
 Does he fear?
 Does she fear?
 I fear
 I fear death before 21

- Melissa Small

Envy

Envy is a voyeur,
as petty and mud-soaked
as one hanging from a window sill,
in an unbalancing act.

Longing is the gust of air
that leaves the body
cold through night.

The two hold hands
like old wedded people
clinging out of obligation.

- Erin Burns-Davies

Doña Barbara

Doña Barbara vestida de latex
A mi diestra instala.

Ninfa post-pubecina
Que a fuerza de latigo
A sus vasallos domina,
Busca con cada swing
Exorcizar los demoñios que la perturban.

¿O quizas, menina inocente jugando a ser mala?

Mi oscuridad siniestra no esta de moda,
Y de mala gana me dejan pasar
Por las amplias fauces que a todos devoran.

Asistiendo al llamado estlelar
Penetro las cavernas de mi Hades,
Buscando a Proserpina que desconocida y errante
Deja tras si migajas de la ilusion,
De algun dia encontrarla.

- Ricardo I. Douel

Moon Bandits

Dimpled children play their fingers
on silhouette flutes and trumpets.
Skipping, they hum to the marble
snails furrowed within the ficus.

The sunset flashes its fired neons.
Gnats encircle sweaty freckled boys
with dungy knees. A football
arches into the arms of a dreamer.
Pigtail girls in blue in blue polka-dot shorts
burp their plastic dolls.

In dangling posture, porch lights
pray for dusk to loom—we are here
we are here, the bulbs proclaim
in gregorian chants of utility.

Red ants march in brown bricks
to the beat of the cricket's
mantra. The bull frog huddles
in the cemented corner kissing
flies as they pass.

Night falls upon suburbia
spangling Libra's scales.
Marigold tales slumber
in shadow of the sapping
pine. Sons and daughters
conform to Sesame Street
beds content in lassoing
twilight, apprehending
the cratered moon,
twitching its reins.

- Natalie Kappes



Mad At The World

Kimberly DaSilva

Emptiness

Like the stain glass window before me

I can see the beyond it forever.

My life...

Hell.

Like the stain glass

just pieces put together to make a pretty picture
not really knowing what is on the inside.

The sunlight that shines through it, before me

I can see my life, all of it

flashing

Reminding me of what I do not wish to be reminded.

Then,

CRASH!

The stain glass window breaks.

I bend down to pick up the broken pieces of my life,

Like the stain glass window....shattered.

- Gene'viene



El Nino

Julian Delorenzo

Nature's Own

Away from the strangling masses of humanity;
The industrialized bulging cities
and hustle-bustle of commercial life,
hides a Utopian world of serenity.

This realm of paradise's serendipity,
revealed in dreams, hopes and aspirations,
lingers just out of reach of
society's greedy little hands,

While mankind slowly demolishes
this beautific garden of life.
For what man cannot have
he takes pleasure in destroying.

Sentinels of Mother Earth
shall arise to prevent
their Mother's destruction with
a natural devastation of their own.

Hurricanes, earthquakes and floods,
Oh my!
These forces of nature serve as reminders
that man is not the tamer, but the tamed.

- Steve Coate



Lion

Nick Doherty

Shadows

Shimmering around me are
shadows in the horizon beyond.
Hiding stealthily in the meadow,
careful not to be seen.
Two young innocents
walk amid the haze
and become pray
for the predator
hiding within.
Survival is pertinent
to a subliminal way of life.
Watch but don't be seen,
hunt but not the hunted.
Lay low beyond the fire,
the smoke is a screen.
Come out when needed,
but remain unseen.

- Andrea Wexler

This Is Just To Say

I have Taken
the verbal criticism
From your volcanic mouth

And swallowed it
As if
it were mine
to eat

Forgive me
it erupted heartburn
so bitter

And so
I regurgitated
it back

- **Sylvia Bauerschmidt**



Solitude



Woman Hugging Herself

Scarlet Elizabeth Rooney

South Campus Writing Contest

"Belle of the Bar"

Hi, my name is Belle, and I'm an alcoholic. Let me tell you about my childhood and how I got to this point in my life. I lived in Mexico, most of my life; raised with an older brother with many emotional and physical problems. My father was a truck driver; my mother was a waitress. My parents spent most of their money taking David into the U.S. for help. I was left home alone with nothing to do. My brother would have fits of rage, destroying furniture paintings, etc. Then he would leave the house like a tornado. Leaving a terrified shocked and scared little sister, in the corner crying. Mom and Dad only said he had a psychological problem, which caused him to act that way.

My Step-grandfather said, "He's just a boy, give him a chance." They argued back and forth for what seemed like hours. Everyone was yelling. I would find a corner in my closet and hide until they left. Monthly we would go to the U.S. for family counseling. We never settled anything.

Finally, the counselor offered dad a job in the U.S. doing odd jobs around the hospital. He accepted, and we moved to Texas, when I was nine years old. We all learned to read and write proper English, and became American citizens. My parents told us to never speak Spanish, because we were Americans now. They hoped to free my brother of his problem by moving. I was always scared, when around my brother. He terrified me. David didn't calm down he just found trouble in different places.

A few months after my ninth birthday my

mother announced that she was pregnant. I was ecstatic; I wanted a little sister. Unfortu-

nately, she had to go to work to help support the baby. Once Joann was born, David spent less time at home, which was good for the baby.

One day David and I were talking about him leaving for the next treatment center, I was eleven, and he was fifteen. David said, "If you really love me you'll take off all your clothes, and let me touch you". I was shaking, because I was scared. But, I was scared what he'd do if I didn't. Cringing and shaking I let him touch me.

Once he was out of the treatment center, he started the same thing all over again. In and out of jail, staying away from the house, and violent fits of rage. Mom put deadbolts on our doors so whenever David threw things, we could lock ourselves in our room. Finally, my parents arranged for my step-grandfather to take David. That was a very confusing and emotional day. I was happy he would be going back to Mexico, but sad because I'd never see him again.

My first drink was when I turned 16 at my Aunt Linda's wedding. People handed me drinks all night long. I drank everything from wine, to mixed drinks. I became violently sick that night. Then I acquired a taste for alcohol. I drank mostly wine, but preferred White Russians. When I drank it was to escape my fear of David. We tried moving again, but I was still scared. Every weekend was spent with my friends getting drunk at car races, and car shows. After I drank all night, I blacked out not remembering anything. I always felt different, like an outcast, or as if I wasn't good enough. My friends laughed when I couldn't watch scary movies

First Place Winner

By Debi Palacino

with them; they brought back too many memories. Those movies made my stomach twist and turn.

At 21, I was kicked out of my parent's house and I moved in with my friend, Shelly. She had a nice apartment and didn't care about me paying rent. While going to school, I needed a drink in the morning before I left. A couple days later Shelly asked me if I wanted to make \$500, in one night. I replied "Sure!" That night we drove to a liquor store robbed the cash register and took some beer. After we finished the beer we stopped at a bar, to celebrate. What happened next, I don't remember. I woke up, and tried to figure out where I was. A strange man was beside me passed out cold. Frantically, I looked around to see if I recognized anything. I looked at the room, the person next to me, outside, nothing was familiar. Realizing that these surroundings were unfamiliar I quickly dressed myself and left. Once outside I noticed my car was not there. I must have left it at the bar, I thought to myself. As I walked I noticed the license plates weren't the same. I was in a different state! This shocked and scared me, so I headed for the closest bar. I met someone, by the name of Frank. He bought me a couple beers, then minutes turned into hours.

Frank and I stumbled out of the pub, to his car. We drove downtown and looked at the old buildings. We walked around for hours, commenting on the architecture. Some of the designs were very ornate. These decorations were made with love, by laborers who took pride in their work. It amazed me that someone loved their job enough to give

their best. Today, people just do enough to get by.

"Oh, Frank look at the arches aren't they gorgeous?"

"That's nothing, wait until I take you to the courthouse."

"Look there's my favorite building. Ever since I moved to the United States, I've dreamed of owning it and turning it into a museum. I would name it The Freedom Tower Museum so other immigrants like me can see the people who came before them, who are now successful. I'd place an ad in the paper asking people to donate documents and pictures of the building when it was first built in the 1930's. This is the Ellis Island of the South. This could be a huge success."

"You're dreaming! You've had too much to drink, that's all."

The thing I remember next was going to Frank's house and him telling me to spread my legs. When I refused, he beat me, then raped me. All I could do was lay there and cry. That morning I pretended nothing happened. I got out of bed wondering why I didn't black out. I proceeded to the refrigerator for a drink; I was in dire need of one. After I drank the beer I hoped a hot shower, would erase the dirty feeling. As I got out of the shower, he came into the bathroom.

"Let me have some pussy, bitch."

"Leave me alone Frank, just get away."

"Come on you little tease, give it to me NOW."

"Frank, don't come any closer or I'll...."

"You couldn't hurt me, I'm bigger and stronger than you."

Before I could think I picked up a pair of

scissors and I stabbed Frank in the leg and arm. I quickly dressed, grabbed a beer and left him bleeding on the floor. I ran to the nearest shopping center, called a cab, found out where I was, then went directly to my mother's house. Thank God it was only forty-five minutes away. Luckily, she was home; but would she let me in? I frantically knocked on the door.

"Mom, please let me in. I need your help!"

"I will not open my door to a daughter that steals from her mother!"

"Mom, I'm sorry, please let me in?"

"I can't trust you, therefore, I won't associate with you. You're a thief and a liar. You're not my daughter, I disowned you years ago."

As I turned to walk up the street, a policeman got out of his car. I ran, but inevitably he caught me. I was arrested for assault with a deadly weapon. Neither my friends nor my family members, would post bail.

I sat in jail for three months before my trial date was set. I couldn't believe that I was in jail again. It seemed like every other week I'm here. The jailers call me by my name, and nobody believed I was raped. How could they not believe me?

Soon after I got there I found my friend, Mary, and she sold me some pot. She was a friendly person. The only thing she expected in return was for me to quit the drugs and alcohol. I always said, "This is the last time Mary, I swear". Then I met Eddie; the jailer, he introduced me to heroin. First, I was sick to my stomach, the room spun, then relaxation. Being in jail isn't that bad. The next day I was depressed, so I asked Eddie for another hit. In exchange he wanted a blowjob. I agreed because I knew that I would feel better after, and I was broke.

First, I shot up, then I gave him a blowjob. As weeks passed I saw him more frequently.

With every visit his demands increased.

The day before the hearing, I was extremely stressed. Eddie came by as usual, but this time he wanted something kinky, which was for all of his friends to watch him have sex with me. I shouted, "NO!" He walked away, I felt like I would die if I didn't get my fix. So I asked Mary, she said that she would no longer help me get drugs or alcohol, because she doesn't think I'd ever quit. Eventually, I called Eddie back and told him "Yes". He gave me my fix then he ripped my clothes off, and punched me. I tried to think about something else. Once he was done with me, the other jailers rushed over with their pants down. They took turns. My body was numb. I woke up with bruises, cuts and burns all over my body, but I vaguely remembered what transpired.

I cleaned up the best I could for the hearing, to no avail, I was found guilty. The judge convicted me of assault with a deadly weapon. Approximately a year from now I will make parole. Although, considering my record I'm shocked I didn't receive a stiffer sentence. I've been in jail now for five months, and nobody came to my hearing. I became depressed, I stayed in my cell, drank, drugged, had sex and slept. It was no surprise when I gained weight. I stayed high all day long. One day I passed out when I walked outside, for exercises. I remember people had laughed and said things like "Let's jump on her and see if she's faking it", nobody tried to help me.

At the county hospital, the doctor informed me, I was four months pregnant. I was kept overnight for observation and tests. I did not care, I only wanted to go back to my cell for a fix. I paced for hours, while I talked to myself.

"What am I going to do? I'm in jail and pregnant."

The morning came with new hope. I

established a new belief. This belief would help me gain my sobriety. When the doctor visited me that morning I enlightened him about my new belief, he agreed this was for the best. Hopefully, this will help my baby. Detoxification wasn't so bad, I slept through most of it. The next week I started morning sickness, "Oh, joy!"

After detox, I went to treatment, for 28 days. After treatment they introduced me to Alcoholics Anonymous. That was an experience I thought I could live without. At five months I was big as a balloon. I had an appointment with the doctor to listen to my baby's heartbeat and to monitor my improvement. I would like a sonogram, to see how the baby looks, but the doctor couldn't do one because they didn't have a machine. I was disappointed, but I prayed, my first prayer, for my baby's health. The next three months flew by. My appointment with the doctor for the eight month check went well.

I felt tired when I went back to my room so I tried to take a nap, only I could not sleep. That evening I went into labor. I arrived at the hospital late therefore I had to give birth naturally. It was painful but I was happy when my baby was delivered. I felt as if I finally did something good. As they handed me my baby I noticed something ironic, his arms and legs were deformed. The nurses told me that sometimes addicts and alcoholics have deformed children.

I named my son, Paco, after my friend in Mexico. Reality hit me, I became enraged and screamed, "God why did you make my baby deformed?" The nurses gave me an oxygen mask and told me to compose myself. I wished I was crippled not my son. What a way to start a new life, a physically handicapped son, and an emotionally handicapped mother who is an addict/alcoholic. I didn't know how to raise a baby. So, I said my second prayer, I asked God to forgive me

placing the blame on him and to help me raise my son. I'm thirty-one, a recovering addict, and a mother of a crippled baby. How could God punish me like this? I'm trying to do the right thing. Now I just want to watch Paco grow up. This must be retaliation for my wicked ways. But, why punish my baby? He had nothing to do with my shortcomings. I was furious with God for punishing my baby.

A few weeks after Paco was born, I had my trial for sentencing. I was fortunate that I was released with custody of Paco, with various stipulations. I was on probation for two years; I was to attend both Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings along with parenting meetings. I was required to obtain "a sponsor". A "sponsor" was "a spiritual person" that was to help me lead a more "spiritual life". Someone to keep me in line. It seemed like a lot for a new mother to do. I thought it would be impossible, but honestly it was just inconvenient.

I had no money, when we left jail so we spent the night in a Lutheran churchyard. The grounds were well kept, and colorful, so I thought it would be a good place to sleep. It looked pretty, and peaceful; these were two things that made me feel relaxed. I made a bed for Paco from a jacket I found, rose petals, and mint.

"Paco, here's a bed that pleasant smell, this should make sleep come easier." I wrapped my arms around Paco, and fell asleep. Today was a very exhausting day, both physically and mentally. It was nice to fall asleep breathing fresh air.

The next morning I was awoken by a unusually radiant man. He was dressed in a black shirt and black pants.

"Hi, my name is Pastor John," he said.

I was still trying to wake up, when he continued.

“I was cooking breakfast for myself in the cafeteria. Would you two care to join me? I made pancakes with ham, eggs and fresh orange juice. I believe we have some formula, too. “

“Oh, yes we’d love to join you, that sounds delicious.”

Breakfast was delicious, he even warmed up some formula for Paco. Even though I breast fed Paco, I thought if I gave him formula this once it couldn’t hurt.

“What are your names? If you don’t mind me asking.”

“My name is Belle and this is my son Paco.”

“Do you need a place to stay? If so, you can live with my family and I until you get yourself settled.”

I couldn’t believe my good fortune. God was looking out for us. Pastor John doesn’t know me and he’s inviting us to live with him. The old Belle would have robbed him, then left, but I knew this was different. I felt extremely honored.

“Shouldn’t you get to know us first? I would feel better if I told you about us first.”

“We can talk in the car, on the way to my house.”

I picked up Paco, and went with the Pastor to his house. It was not a grandiose house, just a cottage. There were a few toys here and there, but it was pristine otherwise. Pastor John introduced me to his wife, Shawna, then his two children, ages two, and five. The Pastor’s children looked adorable. Shawna and I wore approximately the same size clothes, therefore she let me have one of her dresses. She asked me if I wanted to get Paco and myself cleaned up while she looked for old baby clothes. I was delighted to take a shower with only Paco in the room. I gave Paco a sponge bath, and put him in a basket with some clean towels while I took my shower. Revived is how I felt afterwards. The

baby clothes were big, but I was not complaining.

After we cleaned up Shawna told me to let Paco take a nap in her room, in an old crib. But I couldn’t leave my baby. We went for a walk with the Pastor and Shawna. We walked and talked for what seemed like hours. I was uninhibited when I talked to Shawna and Pastor, because they were nonjudgmental. This was why I loved them. They did not condemn me for being an alcoholic, addict, or Mexican. They undeniably trusted me.

That evening, Pastor John asked me if I wanted to go to an A.A. meeting, held in the church rectory. I voluntarily went. Once inside the rectory I felt as if the walls were going to cave in. I’m sure God was watching with disbelief. I tried to shake off my fear, but it was always there.

The meeting started with the reading of how it works, the twelve steps, and twelve traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. The person who was running the meeting announced that he had a special speaker to share tonight.

“Share what?”, I thought silently. Then Pastor John walked up to the podium and said, “Hi, my name is John, and I’m an alcoholic”.

The audience responded, “Hi, John”.

What? Did I hear him correctly? I was in disbelief, the Pastor, an alcoholic? But, he didn’t look like an alcoholic. John began to share his experiences, hopes and strengths. He talked about how difficult it was for him to do the fourth step, which was, “Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.” He went on to talk about his resentments. He had resentments against his bosses, teachers, and yes, even God.

Just then I started to relax; this wasn’t as terrible as I expected. After few more people shared, the speaker asked, “Who

wants to begin a new way of life? Who has an honest desire to quit drinking? If you believe that your life is out of control, and you want to try a new life, come pick up a white chip.”

I raised up out of my seat, walked up to the speaker with Paco in my arms, to receive a hug and white chip. Just as I received it, Paco smiled, as if to say, “I’m proud of you, Mom”. We concluded the meeting with the Lord’s Prayer and everyone holding hands. After the Lord’s Prayer, they said, “Keep coming back, it works if you work it.” I asked Pastor John to be my sponsor. He agreed, under one condition, I stay with him until I become sober and come home every night. If I stay out one night I’m fired.

It’s now seven years later, I’m about to pick up my five year medallion. It seems like only yesterday that I picked up that first white chip, I thought I could quit drinking and stay sober, but it was only after my third relapse that I became willing to take Pastor John’s suggestion. The man isn’t only a Pastor, but, a saint to put up with what I’ve put him through. Today I have a God of my own understanding who helps keep me sober. Paco will walk with me to that podium to pick up that medallion. Just one of the countless miracles I have experienced. Wait, look at that poor girl. She’s as white as a sheet, and shaking profusely. She looks like she doesn’t have anyone or anything to live for. She looks exactly like I did that night when I picked up my first white chip. Please God let her pick up a white chip.

Carcass

.....

Skylar entered her bedroom groping for a light switch in the dark, trying not to awaken the old slumlord below her. She always took her shoes off in the elevator before entering her apartment. The old woman complained about the noise often and judging from her lack of sympathy of any kind regarding the rent Skylar knew an eviction was only one high heeled clunk on the hard wood floor away. Her little stocking feet tiptoed around the bathroom and she took care not to flush the toilet for fear of awakening the fussy old woman. She clumsily removed her contact lenses and had just succeeded in placing them in the correct slots when she heard a noise. Standing absolutely still before the bathroom mirror she made no sound and listened carefully for the scrapping to occur again. Her own wide green eyes stared back at herself and her body had a slight sway as she waited with anguish for the sound. To her the time elapsed seemed like hours cut from her life, but it was only thirty seconds before she heard the scraping, followed by a loud tap. The tragic trauma she had always been expecting as a woman was finally happening. There were many lonely nights when she had contemplated and calculated methods of escaping from her third story studio apartment. “Fuck!” she whispered. She looked around with her lazy drunken eyes for a weapon. The noise had stopped but she dared not move, and waited for the sounds to

commence again. The silence, the humming of the fluorescent bathroom lights, the gentle yawning noise of the running toilet, the vibrating window unit blowing cold damp air, and again the noise. Despite her frozen limbs and pounding heart, she considered investigating, but then the sound ceased. “Maybe he (the rapist) went away,” she thought.

After a fierce battle with her fear she gave in to a drunken smile and praised herself for not banging on the floors for help. She shuffled to her dresser and removed all her clothing in celebration of bravery. Pleased with the figure represented by the curves before her she laughed aloud. She struck some sexy poses and pressed her small breasts together before climbing into her bed. Skylar loved the feel of the crisp sheets on her bare skin and the feel of the cold pillow being hugged to her hot body. She writhed in the cold and sweetly scented sheets, she put the creases between her tired and sweaty toes. Rolling over she rubbed her arms, legs, and face back and forth giggling with coziness to herself. Once again came the sound crashing through her comfort and sleepiness, but this time it was definitely coming from her bathroom.

She sat up sleepily, she was angry and gawking to herself about the plumbing that was supposed to have been fixed last week. “I am not going to pay that ridiculous rent if I can’t be in peace

Stefanie Posteraro

about at least the electrical wiring, What the hell?" Skylar mumbled to herself as she walked towards the bathroom. As she walked yawning grandly towards the bathroom she contemplated disturbing the old lady too, but knew better. The buzzing, the scraping, the tapping became louder, more feverish. She was really frightened now that she would be electrocuted, she knew nothing about wires. Skylar perceived the noise as almost an urgent cry for help, the buzzing echoed and was nonstop. She pulled back the shower curtain and an enormous black roach flew at her head. She screamed and jumped up and down, then ran out of the bathroom slamming the door shut behind her. She whined like a child awaiting a spanking, and behind her she could hear the creature buzzing and slamming its crunchy body against the door angrily. She shuddered and gagged. She was alone in this city, there was no one she could call who would be sympathetic to her situation. She had no bug spray, she never needed it in Canada. Skylar went into her tiny kitchen and searched for anything that would pose a chemical threat to a roach. While she searched she called out to her God, any God for divine intervention, maybe sudden death by natural causes. "Can that happen to roaches?" she wondered briefly. Violence and mutilating the insect would not be possible for her, she could not endure the vibrating crackle of its palmetto body collapsing beneath a sole. Skylar was

armed with an aerosol can of foaming tile and tub cleaner. She tiptoed to the bathroom door and listened for any sound, there was none. As she stood there with her ear to the door she felt a tingle on her bare thigh, something was crawling on her leg she jumped and slapped her leg spraying her breasts with white foam. The floor was vibrating, the old woman awakened. There was nothing on her leg but she felt tingling everywhere. It was quiet again, and she was now focused on her goal. She had anticipated worse things than flying palmetto bugs, but here it was and here she was without an escape plan. She stuck her armed hand through the crack in the door, aimed at the ceiling and sprayed. She closed the door and fell asleep with the foaming tub and tile cleanser beside her, twitching at every slight perception of a roach. Skylar hoped the morning would reveal a carcass in her bathroom.

The Oath

Dr. Edward Rehnquist was ready to go to the Board of Directors this time. As he walked down the sterilized stark white halls of Memorial Hospital toward his patient's room to perform a task any student nurse or orderly could properly execute, he outlined what he would say.

"I will not kowtow to specific patients, simply because they have money to spread around," he would say. "I don't care who they are or how many connections they have. I have worked at this hospital for twenty years now serving the public which includes not only the fat cats and upper crust of society, but those who are less fortunate as well."

Dr. Rehnquist smiled as he thought of how he would drive his point home. "I am sure I do not need to remind anyone here of the Hippocratic Oath we all took when we got out of medical school. According to the oath, we doctors have an obligation to heal everyone, regardless of race, affiliation or social standing."

So it was that Rehnquist was in a halfway decent mood when he stepped past the two bruisers on either side of the door and into room 513.

His "special" patient, one Mr. Lucci, lay comfortably in the largest hospital bed that had been available. Lucci had come to the hospital to get a cancerous gall bladder removed. During the process Lucci had somehow become attached to Rehnquist and because of his generous wealth and known affiliation with the Mafia, the Board of Directors had insisted that Rehnquist attend to Lucci personally.

The offish apes outside the doors were bodyguards. Two more brutes, hulking in their Armanis, stood inside the room; one near the bed with his boss, the other at the foot of the bed near the window which covered most of the far wall.

Rehnquist grimaced at the distasteful bulges in the jackets of the stone faced bodyguards and lifted the syringe of morphine he

had arrived to administer. "Hello, Mr. Lucci. How are you feeling today?"

As Rehnquist took a step towards the bed, the bodyguard at the end of the bed twitched noticeably. Lucci calmed the goon with a wave of his hand. "It's okay Coco, I trust this one. You're a Godsend, Doc. I sure could use that shot right about now."

Lucci winced and Rehnquist delayed the Mafioso's relief from pain a few seconds longer by tapping the needle a couple of times with his forefinger. Lucci was an excessively large man and required an unusually ample dose for the sedative to take effect. Rehnquist depressed the plunger slightly to force the air out of the syringe and all hell broke loose.

A man in black burst through the door and shot the first bodyguard with a silencer-equipped pistol. The second bodyguard, the one Lucci had called Coco, moved quickly but not fast enough. The killer raised his pistol and fired once.

As the killer was taking aim, Rehnquist's survival instincts kicked him into action. Wielding the only weapon available to him, the syringe of morphine, he took a step toward the hitman and plunged the needle into the man's exposed neck, depressing the plunger as far as possible.

The assassin's aim, though affected by being stabbed in the neck, was still effective. Coco fell to the floor, a bullet buried in his chest.

The intruder reached with his left hand to pull the syringe from his neck, while turning towards his attacker. The man before him wavered unsteadily on his feet as he slowly brought the barrel of the pistol to bear on the doctor's chest.

The killed squinted in fierce concentration, stepped back once to maintain his balance, grunted once, fired his pistol and fell to the floor.

The nine millimeter slug lodged itself in

Steve Coate

the plaster wall to the doctor's right, missing him so narrowly, it had ripped through the white cloth of his lab coat, leaving the flesh of his shoulder untouched.

As soon as he had maintained control of his shaking limbs, Rehnquist checked the pulse of the two bodyguards. Both were dead. He then checked the pulse of the killer. He had a slow heartbeat, but strong. He would live.

Rehnquist informed Lucci that his guards were dead. Lucci did not seem to mind too much, but he was ecstatic about having his life saved by the doctor.

"Doc, I owe you my life. If you want anything, it's yours. Just name it."

Rehnquist considered for a moment the man whose life he had just saved and the possible rewards as well as the consequences. "Just leave me out of it, okay? That's all I want. To be left alone." Maybe then, no one else would have to get hurt.

"Consider it done, doc. You had better get out of here now, before the boys in blue arrive. But first, you'd better give me that syringe."

Rehnquist nodded, picked up the syringe, handed it to Lucci and exited the room. The two men performing sentry duty outside the hospital room were slumped in chairs on either side of the door. Only if one looked carefully could they see the telltale splotch of red blood staining the men's garments.

After the doctor had left the room, Lucci made a phone call to a friend of the family, giving the man careful instructions. He then coaxed himself out of bed and carefully bent next to the closest of his dead bodyguards, retrieving the man's gun. Lucci then shuffled over to the window, opened it and tossed the syringe to the ground below where it shattered into several pieces. Lucci then stood where Coco had fallen, show his would-be assassin's still form twice, dropped the gun next to Coco's body

and got in bed to wait for someone to arrive.

Rehnquist performed his doctoral duties with machine-like precision that day and even managed to look surprised when he heard of the contract killing that had almost occurred in room 513. He answered any questions the police had for him, providing them with whatever information they requested (omitting of course the situation with the syringe). When he finally got home, he went straight to bed. Getting to sleep was difficult, however, because he kept wondering if he had done the right thing in regards to Mr. Lucci.

The following morning, Rehnquist awoke, brewed some Folgers and went to the front door to retrieve the morning paper. He opened the door, looked down at the porch and proclaimed in a broken voice, "Oh God."

As the repercussions of his actions the previous day sunk in, his World's Greatest Doctor coffee mug tumbled slowly end over end to crash with shattering reality against the concrete porch. Rehnquist retreated into the house slamming the door in the vain hoping it could keep the rest of the world from him.

The lone copy of the New York Times sat innocently on the porch, objectively informing its readers of the day's news. The top story bore a headline that screamed in bold typeface: Hospital hit sparks Mob war: 12 dead.

The End.

Phillip

Phillip was completely useless. That was the general consensus of our fifth grade class . There are a few more judgmental and prejudiced creatures than children considering one of their own. In the first few weeks of school, everyone is held in constant scrutiny. The “cool” are quickly separated from the “nerds”, and the former immediately picked apart, and the constant would harassment would begin.

Being kids, issues of race, religion, or politics were not important to us. Crucial matters of physical looks, weight, braces, clothes, and what action hero graced your lunch box were the criteria we used to measure the worth of a person. By “we,” I mean those people lucky enough to avoid inspection and derision, and instead got to inflict them.

I was one who passed the test. My looks were average, not striking, but passable. I could make people laugh. My clothes were current, and my Batman lunch box was the envy of my peers.

Phillip was not so lucky. In every way we found him lacking. He was grossly overweight, with a pale, pasty white complexion, freckles, braces, and unkempt hair. He wasn’t exactly the sharpest tack on the pad either, always seeming to say the most inopportune things at exactly the wrong time. His clothes were obviously garage sale fodder, and he carried his lunch in a ziploc bag-a cardinal sin. It took no time at all to make him feel thoroughly unwelcome.

We’d snicker and point as he made his daily entrance into the classroom, the volume was always just loud enough for him to notice. It became a game among us to come up with the cruellest nickname for him. It was a contest I won many times. My offering of “Land Mass” garnered me three Snickers bars and a bag of Fritos from my constituents.

When it came time for recess, Phillip was always picked last. We tripped him in line. We stole his glass. We brutally ostracized him from every facet of classroom life. We felt absolutely no remorse for this.

It’s just the way things were done. Besides, wasn’t it his fault for falling short of the mark? We seemed to think so.

Phillip tried very hard to pretend that what we did didn’t bother him at all. He’d even try to laugh along occasionally, like it was his role to be our punching bag. But our shots found their mark, whether he showed it overtly or not. We’d catch him blubbering pathetically after a particularly witty attack, then ridicule him for his weakness. Every once in a while he’d lash out, screaming at one of us after a single, innocuous remark. Such an outburst would leave us taken aback. What was his problem? Couldn’t he handle a little teasing?

The daily routine of give-on our part, and take-on Phillip’s continued uninterrupted through the first half of the year. I persisted in doing my share of the taunting using

David Yaeger

whatever inspiration hit me to hit Phillip.

I don't mean to give the impression that we did nothing but torment the poor child. We equally considered matters of baseball, cooties, candy, and comic books, all very important parts of our young lives. But Phillip was pleasant diversion when regular conversation failed, and we roasted him on a spit of verbal abuse whenever it did. Our fun continued on through late February, the time of the annual science fair.

The science fair was one of the biggest of our year. You were assigned a partner and together you devised an experiment, executed it, presented it, and received a joint grade. Your partner was chosen by the teacher, and few people were ever pleased with who they got. I certainly wasn't turning cartwheels when my teacher announced that I would be paired with Phillip. It meant lots of work and one-one time with a person I considered to be on a completely different, and much lower, plane of existence. For his part Phillip, also, was not thrilled to be shackled to one of his chief tormentors.

Working on a science project required spending hour together out of school, formulating our presentation. I invited Phillip to my house, more out of a desire avoid his home than for him to see mine. We worked together surprisingly well, both very focused on getting our project done, as that would be the most expedient way to leave each other's company.

We resolved to do a model of the solar system and busied ourselves in painting Styrofoam balls as planets, and in writing our summary of the galaxy. But, being children, our attention eventually drifted from our work, and we were forced into conversation. After a few minutes of talk, I was shocked to find myself laughing with Phillip. As it turned out, we watched many of the same TV shows and liked the same kinds of food. We both liked to read, and Phillip was the only person I'd ever met who liked football half as much as I did. I ashamedly found myself beginning to like the boy who I'd made it a point to hate.

Phillip and I got a ninety-six on our project. When it was over, my friends congratulated me for surviving the ordeal of being stuck with "the idiot" and welcomed me back to the world of "cool". Business continued as normal, with the war on Phillip's psyche waged as vigorously as ever. But I couldn't participate as I once did. I began to grow irritated with those I'd once laughed with and gradually distanced myself from the group.

Phillip and I never became friends, though I knew him long after the fifth grade. But I'd like to think that after the science fair he never regarded me as a threat. The lesson I took from the experience was that typecasting and ritual insulting of people based on superficial appearances was a part of childhood in which I no longer wished to take part. The outside of a person is only just that, and only the inside of a person is inadequate measuring rod of his worth.

Robert Meeker Memorial Writing Contest Winner

"Why I Want Breast Implants"

As I take my seat in History class, I pick up yet another of those new infamous cards, offering free admission and cheap drinks at a local liquor/meat-market emporium. This particular offer has Pamela Anderson Lee, draped (barely) in Old Glory, armed with pouting lips and comely cleavage, ready to inspire patriotic fervor in our young BCC men. As I study the picture a little more closely, I realize why I have trouble spurring the men in my life to greatness. It's my breasts! They're just too small. Although I have often had lively discussions with men on issues of national importance, not one of them has ever implored me to don the American Flag to demonstrate my loyalty to any union. I want to be a national icon every bit as important as Pamela Anderson Lee. The issue is settled — I'm getting breast implants.

As a pre-teen, I waited patiently for the signs that I was becoming a woman. I couldn't wait to buy that first bra, and when I was twelve years old, my mother finally took me shopping for the undergarment that was sure to change my life. I was nervous that day, but excited too. What kind would it be? A sweet and innocent creation, adorned with lace and roses, or maybe a plunging number with under-wire? It was almost too much for my twelve year old brain to contemplate, and my heart was racing as we approached the Lingerie Counter at Woolco Department Store. The old lady behind the counter saw us coming and approached us, giving us a knowing look over her tiny eyeglasses that were attached with a chain around her neck. I'll never forget her. She smelled of cheap perfumed talc, and had lipstick stuck to her front tooth.

"Our training bras are against the wall in the back of the department," she said. I was devastated. My dreams of conquering the world with breasts of gold were shattered. Training Bra? Why bother? We should have just gone to the Boy's Department and bought some undershirts. At that moment, I wanted to hide in the dressing room and never come out.

My mother still insisted on shopping, and after thirty minutes worth of humiliation, trying on one pre-teen style after another, we finally left the store with two garments that could have easily been mistaken for Ace bandages. Mother said they were "cute". Cute was not the effect I was after. I was going more for captivating. There are not too many ladies that can say there were captivating in a training bra. Brooke Shields comes to mind, and I was no Brooke Shields.

Size and shape have improved slightly since then, but at this time in my life I am starting to stick out in all the wrong places. Just once, I would like it if I could not see my toes for reasons other than impending childbirth. I do think about the pain that will accompany the implant surgery, but it will all be worth it if, just once in my life,

First Place Essay

Mary Jean Malheuson

instead of some gentleman asking my opinion on Persing II Missiles, he would tell me that my breasts remind him of these powerful weapons. I have imagined such a conversation in my mind many times.

“What do you think about the situation in the Middle East?” I say to my dinner companion for the evening.

“I think you have the most beautiful breasts I have ever seen,” he says, his gaze lingering at my cleavage. “They are so perfectly shaped, and so large. I think that they alone could settle any disputes between civilized men.” After this dinner, he will never be the same. He doesn’t even know his tie is in his soup.

Ahh, triumph at last!

So thank you, Pamela Lee. You have inspired me to a new level of achievement and self-fulfillment. I am going home immediately to dig my American Flag out of a box in the garage. I am feeling more like a flag-waving patriot every minute. After breast enlargement, the whole world will be open to me. I hear they even have a new surgical procedure to enhance cleavage by injecting body fat into the center of your chest. I have lost of body fat so I could have really great cleavage. I think I’ll keep this club invitation. I may need it to talk myself into liposuction.

1st Place Winner

Robert Meeker Memorial Writing Contest

"The Unmentionables" Dane McGuckian

I pulled in the laundry. The street below was just beginning to bubble. Soon it would be spilling over with mad commuters stepping on top of each other to make it to work. My love was among them on her way to serfdom. I, on the other hand, was free my only obligation was to the laundry.

The sound of the close-line's pulleys filled the air like a chorus of seagulls. Each garment danced a strange calypso in the wind, as it made its way to me. The soft, fluffy white of abducted linens that once resided in the Plaza or the Waldorf was my Zen. That day was different though, that was the day I spotted them among the sheets: a foreign pair of shorts! They floated in off the line on a cushion of air as if they had nothing to hide. Until that moment, I considered myself pretty sane. I tried to rationalize the garment off as probably belonging to one of my girlfriend's friends whose washer broke, or perhaps a visiting relative who forgot them haphazardly in the hamper. "Of course," I thought, "Uncle Fred was just here in November... of 89." I ran over to ask Jim, my neighbor, if he saw something.

I couldn't just ask though; I didn't want to air my dirty laundry with the whole building, so inconspicuously I strolled over to his grotto. Once at his door, I knocked. It opened, and there stood Jim with his hair sticking up in some spots and matted in others.

"Say Jim, think I could score some detergent? I'm fresh out."

"But it's eight in the morning!"

"The early bird gets the boxer-leavin', scum-suckin', womanizing worm."

"Wh— what?"

"Nothing'. Look, do you have the detergent?"

I followed Jim back to his laundry room, but

before I could ask if he had any strange guys hanging around my apartment I noticed he was wearing a pair of paisley boxers. I began to speculate, but before I could reach and completely warped conclusions, he handed me a cup of white laundry crystals and ushered me out the door. Now, I was really tweaked! My mind whirled with fervent thoughts.

Back in my place the day dragged, and my wounded heart festered while I awaited her return. I began tearing through the apartment looking for more evidence. Madly driven by rage, I emptied her dresser. Soon I started flinging shorts, bras, underwear, and sex toys over my shoulder looking for a lock of hair, a tie clip, something to further incriminate her.

She got in after six. Clothing was strewn about the place. The horizon out our window was phosphorescent with purples and reds in an apparent manifestation of my mood.

"So where have you been?"

"You know where I've been-work!"

"Work ha!"

I informed her that I knew about the affair. "What are you talking about?" she retorted. Holding up the unmentionables to thwart her brazen denial, I yelled, "Don't play witless with me, I found these in the wash!" Instead of a desperate plea for forgiveness she burst into uncontrollable laughter. I demanded that she sober up. Eventually, after regaining her breath, she explained her humorous take on the situation.

"Just desserts, darling, just desserts," she said.

I was confused until she pulled a purple, lace g-string and matching bra from her purse. "The other day, I found these in the couch..."



Waiting

Renee' Slade

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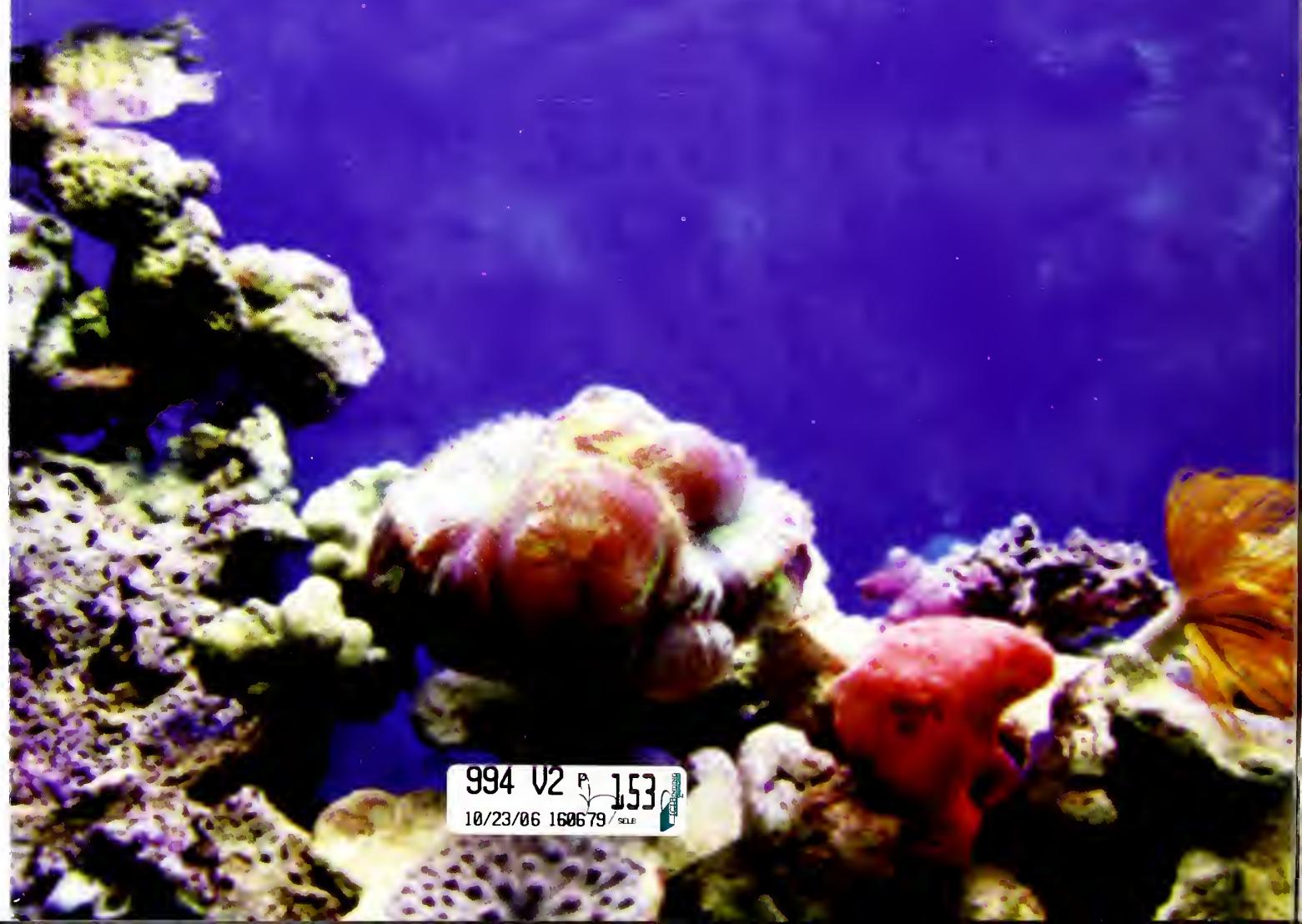
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